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MARRIED BENEATH HIM.

VOL. II.

MARRIED BENEATH HIM.

BY THE AUTHOR OF

"LOST SIR MASSINGBERD."

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

London and Cambridge:
MACMILLAN AND CO.
1865.

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250. u. 18.

LONDON:
R. CLAY, SON, AND TAYLOR, PRINTERS,
BREAD STREET HILL.

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MARRIED BENEATH HIM.

CHAPTER I.

A TRIP TO OLDBOROUGH.

It must be a chilling circumstance to any young gentleman, whose arms are extended lovingly to receive his bride, to find within them the unresponsive form of his mother-in-law; but something much worse than disappointment awaited Mr. Frederick Galton. He had closed the door with eager haste, and advanced with outstretched hands quite close to her he would have welcomed ere he discovered his mistake, and now he stood like one turned into stone, looking not upon his love, but upon some messenger of evil tidings. Even

in that ill-lighted, dusky parlour, it was easy enough to read the lines of recent sorrow in the countenance of his visitor, and the expectation of some worse woe to come. Her whole presence was instinct with it. No man who beheld her could have said, This is a lady, or not a lady; but must needs have thought of his own mother, and felt a touch of pity. She uttered the few words with which the last chapter concluded, and taking up the one candlestick that stood on the table, held it close to Frederick's face, as though it had been a printed page.

"You have a handsome countenance, young gentleman," said she, "and honest eyes: I wonder whether you have a heart."

"Are you come to break it, then?" groaned Frederick piteously. "Speak, speak in mercy, woman." He was on his knees, looking up into her calm, despairing face, and plucking at her coarse crape sleeve. "O tell me, tell me, that your daughter is not dead!"

"I have brought you back your verses," said the

widow in a low, calm voice, but mechanically, like one who is repeating a lesson, "and the note that you wrote to her when you were parted; you may make use of them, perhaps, with somebody else." She spoke with exceeding bitterness, dropping each word into his ear like molten metal. "Please to give me back her foolish, ill-spelt letter (if you have it still) and her lock of hair." But when he covered his face, and fell down before her sobbing, she added: "Then you did love her, did you, Mr. Galton, after all?"

"*Did*, woman! I love her now. Dead or alive, she is mine! Take me to where she is. You could not—no, you dare not have buried her without my being sent for. What is this? You are lying! She is not dead. You could not smile like that, if she were dead, being your own daughter."

"No, sir, she is not dead," returned the old lady in a voice now trembling for the first time; "but she is very ill; dying, I fear, for love of you. I would not have come here, like a beggar, to ask for more than gold, but that, as you say, she is my own daughter, and, ah sir

my pride, my all! I am no schemer, sir, God knows. I would to heaven your eyes had never lit upon my Mary, nor hers on you. I want no young gentleman for my son-in-law. But when your uncle, Mr. Morrit, came over to us, and offered money——"

"Money!" exclaimed Frederick passionately. "What! he tempted Mary with a bribe to play me false? damned juggling priest!"

"Hush, hush, sir! Pray be calm. I see now that you had nothing to do with it. That was what Mary always said. But when he told her that you and she could never be married, and that you knew that as well as he, and that you had already found another young woman—I am only repeating what your uncle told us, you know, sir, and being a clergyman, why, of course, I believed him—much more suitable as to circumstances, in case a boy of your age was to think of such matters at all; then Mary—poor thing!—she seemed to fade away just like any rose in one's parlour-window; nay, after a week or two, she became almost a shadow, and the doctor says it is consumption, if there is nothing

which is afflicting her mind—which, however, is unhappily the case. And so I came here, unknown to my poor darling, on the slight chance that things might not be exactly as they were represented. It was very wrong of me, I fear, and self-humiliating; but it is *I*, remember, who have come to seek you, and not Mary. She would not have come—not she—to save her own life; and if I had found you the heartless lad whom I expected to find, I should have taken back with me all the tokens she had given you of her misplaced love, and returned them to her, so that she should no longer be flattered by false hopes. For she does hope still, I know, Mr. Galton, for all that I can say to convince her. It seemed to me that it would be almost better for her to die than to live on trusting to——. Oh, young gentleman, God forgive me for thinking the things that I have thought of you these many days!" And the dear old lady's chin began to move up and down in a manner which, to the attentive observer, as Admiral Fitzroy would say, portends much rain.

"You are going back to Oldborough at once, I suppose," cried Frederick; "by to-morrow's coach?"

"By to-night's mail, Mr. Galton," replied the old lady, wiping her eyes with vigour. "It starts at half-past eleven, and arrives at Wentworth Junction in time for the first morning train. My dear Mary thinks I am gone to London to decline her situation with Lady Ackers, which she is much too ill to accept, and she will expect me home to breakfast. What blessed comfort I shall have to bring her—I who have striven so hard to persuade her that you had forgotten her! I shall see her smile once more."

"That is a sight which I would not miss on any account," said Frederick gravely. "I will go with you to-night to Oldborough, and see her too."

"You *will!*" cried the old lady, starting up like one of half her age, and putting both her hands in his. "Oh, but this is a brave boy!" She scanned him from head to foot with eyes that had no longer suspicion or ill-will in them. "I do not wonder that my Mary loves you.—But no, Mr. Galton, this must not be. We

must do nothing rashly. You might get into trouble for leaving school—(she looked up at his tasselled cap) —that is, I mean college. You are very, very young; that was what Mr. Morrit dwelt upon so. I am wrong, it will be said, to come and tempt you to do what your relations so disapprove—taking advantage, as it were, of your youth and tenderness of heart. And yet, what is all that to me, when my daughter is dying!"

"Ay, what indeed?" echoed Frederick. "Now see, you have come to me on a matter of life and death: you can tell the porter that as you go out, and I will be at the coach-office in half an hour."

With one squeeze of the old lady's hand, as earnest of his faithfulness rather than adieu, the young man hurried away to his rooms, and thrust some necessaries into a carpet-bag. Then he wrote a few hurried lines to the Principal (who, by great good-fortune, happened to be out at a dinner-party that evening), preferring that course to asking leave of absence upon such an expedition of any subordinate authority of his college.

The resolution of the gatekeeper, who would have

opposed his egress, was overcome by the young man's passionate anxiety and assurance that he had made matters all right with Dr. Hermann; and within an hour of leaving that roaring supper-party, he was sitting behind the night-mail, with Mrs. Perling for his sole companion. The inside places had been taken, but that was of no consequence to the wheelwright's hardy widow; and as for himself, he could scarcely have endured confinement in his excited state of mind.

Expulsion from Minim Hall was the least grave of the possible contingencies which might follow his present course of action. First, of course, in his thoughts was the joy of meeting with his love after an absence that had almost extended to the six months, which had been agreed upon as the limit of their separation. All conscientious scruples about anticipating the date were swept away from his mind by the news of his uncle's conduct. There had been a tacit understanding, as he conceived, that no influence should be used as respected his attachment to Mary Perling either on one side or

the other; if he did not press his suit, neither was his family to interfere in opposition to it, and far less in so discreditable a manner as Mr. Morrit had done. With that gentleman, he was furiously indignant, and really not without considerable reason. The curate had not behaved like a gentleman, or, as Frederick would have expressed it, had he been only a little less exasperated, "like himself." Perhaps this gentlemanliness, which includes so many excellent things, is only comparative with the very best of us. No one possesses it in perfection. We may be honourable, and honest, and delicate-minded in a vast number of things, yet mean enough in others. It was very base in the Rev. Robert Morrit to ride over to Oldborough, and misrepresent matters in the way which he had done; although, from his own stand-point, the affair wore, doubtless, a very different aspect to that which it presented to Frederick. Here was a lad with a foolish fond father, about to ruin himself socially, at the very commencement of his life, by a low, and, very probably, a vicious marriage. Was it likely, even putting other considera-

tions of immense importance out of the question, that a servant girl who suffered herself to be made love to by her master's son, should make him a virtuous wife? Could she ever seriously have flattered herself that he would make her his wife at all? Would she not be inclined to make a favourable composition for so ridiculous a claim, and would not slight damages for such a breach of promise suffice, if offered promptly by the defendant's attorney—that is, by his reverend uncle—in ready money? Would it not be well to put one's cheque-book in one's pocket, and visit the wheelwright's widow in person, and inquire the lowest figure at which this little matter could be managed. Something like this had probably passed through the mind of the well-meaning Mr. Morrit. But arrived at Oldborough, he had met with unexpected opposition, and found human nature itself quite inconsistent with his previous conceptions.

Clergymen who aspire to be men of the world subject themselves to disappointments of this kind, more, perhaps, than any other class of people; and they are also

inclined to be obstinate under failure. Upon discovering the phenomenon of a wheelwright's widow in indigent circumstances, not eagerly desirous to exchange her daughter's feelings for bank-notes, and the daughter herself really drooping and melancholy, like some low-born maiden in a ballad sick for love of a king's son, the curate lost his temper. He not only dwelt upon the madness and folly of the attachment he had come to dissolve, and pointed out the destruction it must needs entail upon his nephew's prospects, but he took to pious frauds. He represented Frederick himself as being not unwilling that the matter should drop, and, I am afraid, greatly exaggerated certain statements which the Principal of Minim Hall had written concerning the young freshman and Miss de Lernay. "I think," wrote the doctor in confidence, "that the society of Miss de Lernay is gradually winning our young friend from his melancholy."

"I am advised, Mrs. Perling," misquoted the curate, "that my impressionable nephew has already been smitten with the charms of a young lady at Camford,

not unsuitable to be his wife, if he happened to be seven-and-twenty, instead of seventeen; being the boy he is, such a thing is not worth mentioning, and I only speak of it in mercy to your daughter, that she may cease to consider the attentions of such a butterfly lover as anything at all serious."

Well-meaning but wicked words, which bore fruit the very opposite of that which the speaker intended: they sent Mary Perling's pulse down to something not worth mentioning, so that the Oldborough doctor shook his head about her; they drove her mother, as we have seen, off to Minim Hall; and they were now driving her back again, at ten miles an hour, by the side of the very young gentleman whom it had been their sole intention to keep apart from her and hers for ever.

Frederick Galton's ire was great, as he thought upon these things; but he well knew that the good doctor had been no party to the curate's design or its execution, and therefore, as respected his father, the young man's conscience smote him sore with respect to the

present undertaking. Unpleasant thoughts flitted across him concerning that sorrowful parent toiling on for his sole benefit night and day, over the lonely Downs, and the little return he was himself now making for it all.

Was it not holding cheap that life-long love thus to——

"But then she is ill, she may be even dying," answered the poor lad aloud, as though he would have stifled the still small voice of conscience by articulate speech.

"Oh, let us hope not that," replied Mrs. Perling simply. "I look to the sight of you quite setting her up again."

Setting her up again! a very common expression surely, and perfectly intelligible; yet somehow it jarred upon the young man's ear. While the good widow had been pleading her daughter's cause with natural eloquence, she had aroused in Frederick a very honest admiration for herself; but now that her cause (as surely it deserved to do?) had triumphed, he began to

grow fastidious about his mother-in-law elect. Why need she have confided to him her opinion that it was a shame that the coach-seats were built so high, or at least that there were no footstools provided for persons like herself, with short legs. Also, how could that relative expectant have such an extraordinary relish for sandwiches, which had obviously been carried about with her for a considerable time. She had offered this unpleasant refreshment to him in a newspaper; and though he had not partaken of it, it had destroyed his appetite quite as completely as if he had. Would Mary have eaten them, he wondered? Fancy Eugenie de Lernay eating sandwiches which seemed to have received the impression of the human form? Arrived at the railway station, the widow insisted upon using her third-class return ticket, which, of course, consigned Frederick also to cushionless seats. He was very tired by that time; and would have hailed the conveniences for repose afforded by the class he usually travelled by; and, moreover, he thought the guard addressed him in a tone that he was not accustomed to

hear from railway officials. These, indeed, were small inconveniences, not to be considered by a philosopher, but their aggregate effect upon the young gentleman was considerable. He was not so blind a lover, even then, but that the passing thought, "and if I marry this woman's daughter, I shall be subject all my life to petty humiliations such as these," overclouded his mind.

Weary as he was by the time they reached their journey's end, the sight of Oldborough church tower, with the reflections which it evoked—"Shall I be married there, I wonder, or at Casterton, and when?"—revived him like a tonic. The little station, with its tiny strip of garden shining in the morning sun, backed by the ancient woods that overhung the sleeping town, and skirted the broad river which ran through it, made up a pleasant picture. Declining to take advantage of the omnibus accommodation, upon the plea that "sixpence saved was sixpence got," Mrs. Perling led the way on foot through quite an avenue of elms to an old stone bridge, with whose little toll-house the town might be

said to commence. Nothing was moving at that early hour save the innumerable rooks which clanged and circled in the clear blue air. All Nature wore an air of placid beauty. The stream which circled and eddied beneath the archways shot forth beyond them, smooth and swift, dividing silently where it met the osier-beds, and reuniting beyond them only to divide again. Somewhere out of sight, however, the river forked, and the sound of far-off waters tumbling—some distant "lasher" —struck musically upon the ear.

"What a lovely spot!" exclaimed Frederick, leaning for a moment over the balustrades.

"Ay, indeed," rejoined the widow, briskly; "and especially next month, when the regatta is held here, and there are shows upon the island, and fireworks at the weir, and all the street yonder is lined with booths, and you can scarcely hear yourself speak for bands of music."

"And you like that sort of thing, do you?" inquired the fastidious one.

"Why, no; not I," answered the unconscious widow.

"My young days are gone by, when I took pleasure in such things; but Mary, she, of course, enjoys herself when she can; or, at least, she used to do so, poor dear! And when the ball was held on the Eyot last year, just before her poor father died—which couldn't be foreseen, alack, alack—there was nobody so sought after, I can tell you, though she was but just sixteen. I should have been quite against her going, but that it was so kind of the regatta committee to send us tickets. Some people thought us quite stuck up for accepting them, but it was not for us to be rude to gentlefolks, and send them back again; and I am sure there was not a girl in the company who looked more the perfect lady than did our Mary, although I says it as shouldn't say it.—This is the short way, Mr. Galton, over this stile. Lord! how white you do look; well, and I daresay you're tired, not being used to sit up o' nights like me; but you shall have some gin and peppermint directly, which, as my poor husband used to say, is the only thing when you feel a little down-like. That is our cottage yonder, under the limes."

Frederick did indeed feel a little "down-like," but not from that species of depression which could be cured by the recipe in question. He was hurt beyond measure at the notion of his Beloved Object having been patronized by a regatta committee, and made up his mind that Oldborough Church, at least, of all churches, should never witness his marriage with Mary Perling. He already beheld a crowd of vulgar spectators, some of whom could doubtless boast of having encircled, in the waltz, her lovely waist with their horrid arms. When Mrs. Perling said "There is the cottage," however, he forgot everything, but that he was looking upon the dwelling of the most beautiful girl in England, and one who loved him so intensely, that she could not live without him: that confession had in effect been almost made to him by her mother, and it was amply corroborated by his own heart. His pulses throbbed with the fulness of the spring at the sight of the low-roofed house now coming into view. It was a very unambitious red-bricked edifice, with a wooden porch to the door, sadly in want of a coat of paint. A

little garden, given up mostly to vegetables, rapidly merged into an apple-orchard, not very promising as to fruit; but there was an arbour in the latter, overlooking the weir, which caught Frederick's eye at once, possibly as being a place adapted for love-passages. Mrs. Perling observed his glance in that direction, and explained that the arbour had been her husband's favourite haunt of a summer evening, but that now—none of them having the heart to go near it—it was occupied with apples and onions, and tools; he had likewise, she added, liked to sit with his pipe under "them limes," which, although they overshadowed all the roof, stood at the back of the house in the wheelwright's yard. A pleasant smell of wood-chips here made itself apparent, which told of this latter locality. "Our Mary is sure to be up and waiting for me, for she can't sleep, poor thing; she as was used to be such a lie-a-bed; but the kitchen is at the back, so she won't see us a-coming; neither will Jane, who is getting the breakfast ready; so we shall come upon them quite unawares. Now, do you stay in the passage a minute, while I go in to prepare her—for she is very

weak." Thus speaking, Mrs. Perling opened the door, which was unprovided with bell or knocker, and letting the latch down softly behind her, motioned to her companion to remain where he was.

CHAPTER II.

MARY PERLING AT HOME.

STANDING in semi-darkness, Frederick Galton saw the widow open a door at the end of the passage, through which streamed a river of light upon the white-washed walls and sanded floor. He could not see into the room itself, but could hear all that passed in it. Some one seemed to rise with haste, and yet with difficulty, and there was a sound of uneven footsteps hastening to meet her.

"Dearest mother," cried a brisk and cheerful female voice; "how quietly you stole in upon us."

Then there was a hurried embrace, and "How is our dear invalid to-day? How is my beautiful child?"

"I am well enough, mother," rejoined a third person, at whose tones, though low and languid, Frederick's heart leapt within him, and the love-light came into his eyes. "I am not worse than when you left me, and no better. But you, I fear, have fagged yourself sadly about that situation at Lady Ackers's. What a trouble I am to everybody about me!"

"No, no, no, my pretty one," replied her mother tenderly; "you are nothing but a blessing to us all. If we could only see you well again, we should be as happy as the day is long, shouldn't we, Jane?"

"Ay," cried the brisk voice, "that should we; and we *shall* see it, too. Heaven never could have sent our Mary only to pine and fade. The idea of those pretty cheeks getting hollow and sunken; it is not to be entertained for a moment; no, they are dimples, that is all, and the colour that is gone for a little, is soon coming back again, isn't it, Bob? *Cherry ripe, cherry ripe.*" And the note of some imprisoned bird began at once to imitate that popular melody.

Then there was a sad silence, broken by little sobs.

"Mary, Mary," cried the brisk voice earnestly, "O pray, do not give way thus; you'll break mother's heart, who loves you so, and mine, sweet sister. There are brighter days in store."

"Many, many, I hope," added the widow confidently.

"For you, dear mother, and Jane, I hope there are," replied Mary feebly; "I am sure you deserve them, which I do not; I have been of no use in this world to anybody. A vain and foolish girl—a wicked girl. You will get on better when I am gone."

Again the hasty and uneven walk; and Frederick knew that loving arms were being thrown around the suffering girl, and lips pressed to hers that might have drawn forth any poison from a wounded heart, save that alone with which Love tips his darts.

"Can I not give you any comfort, my own dear sister? Has he taken all power from me, as health and youth from you?" cried a passionate voice.

"Hush, hush," replied the sick girl earnestly. "You don't know what you say. I had rather die than not have loved him even now. How hard and cruel you

look, Jane! I know that you are thinking evil of him. I would rather you thought evil—yes, I would—of *me*. Ah, if you could only see him! You say that I am fair; his face is ten times pleasanter to look upon than mine. He is thoughtful, like yourself, sister, and reads —why, he reads everything, and there is nothing he does not know. Then he is an author, a poet: I could show you—if it were not that he has forbidden me to do so—the most beautiful verses; ah, so sweet, so sweet, and all for me, for me alone!"

The voice that had been somewhat testy and irritable, as is but too usual with the best of us, when inadequate comfort—"the vacant chaff well meant for grain"—is offered to our aching hearts, here dissolved in plaintive melody; the speaker's thoughts were once more with her lover and the happy past.

"I have read, dear sister," returned the other gravely, "that it is easy for those who have the gift of verse to persuade not only others of their sincerity, but even themselves; I do not say they lie"——

"Thank you, Sister Jane," interrupted the sick girl

bitterly; "that is very kind, and like your charity. How dare you tell me things like these—you who know not what it is to be beloved."

"That is true, dear Mary," responded Jane Perling meekly. "God has seen fit to limit my love to my mother and my sister. Pray, don't be pained, dear; I know you did not mean to twit me with my lameness; and what you say is very true. I do not know what the passion is with which this man has inspired you; and loving you so, and seeing the harm he has done you, perhaps I judge him harshly."

"You do, you do, Jane," cried the young girl enthusiastically.

"Still, if he has ceased to love you, Mary."

"Who told you that, Jane?" inquired a terrified hollow voice, which Frederick for the moment did not recognise. "If you want me to die at once, repeat such words as those. No; don't kiss me, please, just now; I do not want your kisses. If I was away from home, look you, in service, or somewhere, so that I could not come to you, and they

would not let me write, and if a man came hither—a clergyman even—and told you that I neither cared for you nor mother, would you believe him?"

"Indeed, Mary, we never should."

"But if he told you *truth*. If, through absence, or constant persuasion, or some means that you could not even imagine, I had really grown so as to forget you, or, at all events, to agree never to see you more, and to endeavour to feel as though I had neither mother nor sister—would you straightway forget *me?* Would your love fade away as quickly as mine? Could you thenceforth live merrily on, with my memory blotted out of your heart also, as though I had never been? Would not the days we have passed together from our youth up, recur to you, even though you strove to forget them; our games in the orchard, our feasts in the summer-house, our trips on the river; the nights and nights we have lain awake with our arms around one another's necks, and you have told me stories of your own weaving?"

"I should remember them all, Mary; I think I should

even recollect them better for the cruel separation between us and you."

"Then how much more, Jane," urged the sick girl solemnly, "should I not believe the wicked falsehoods that are told about—about my *love*. And if I did believe them—which I do not; no, I will not think he has forgotten me, although he is so wise and so much above me every way—do you think that I could forget *him?* Oh, never, never to my dying day! I should love him, almost the better, because he had so cruelly forsaken me."

"Then, if he wrote to say that he remained faithful to you, my dear," quoth Mrs. Perling, as drily as she could, "he would actually lose something of your affection. While if he came in person"——

"Mother?" cried the young girl eagerly, "you have seen him. There is some one in the passage. I hear a step that I should know among a thousand. Fred, Fred, Fred!"

Mary Perling rose from her chair, in which she had been sitting before the fire, propped by pillows, and

strove to run to meet him; but if Frederick Galton had not caught her in his ready arms, she must have fallen through sheer weakness. Her looks were sadly altered since he had seen her last at Casterton, and yet she was not less beautiful than before. She had never wanted refinement, but a certain transparent grace pervaded her now, which became her vastly. A stranger would have been moved to tenderness by the contemplation of those plaintive eyes, those cheeks so waxen wan; what wonder, then, that the young poet-lover threw himself upon his knees beside her, regardless of the comfortless stones, and covered her attenuated hand with a hundred kisses.

This really affecting scene took place in a kitchen—a very clean one, it is true, with everything within it brushed and furbished to an extent rarely seen, save in one of Her Majesty's lighthouses—but still a kitchen.

Now that the wheelwright's business had been disposed of, and there were no heavy-footed men to come in and out of the cottage, making a "caddle" everywhere, it was the economical custom of the Perling family to use this apartment as a sitting-room. It

looked out upon the yard instead of the garden, indeed, but still it was a cheerful, comfortable room enough, "and one saves the parlour-fire in winter, and the wear and tear of the best carpet," explained the widow in apology; "and you see Mary's chair is quite out of the draft from the scullery-door. And here is another chair for you, Mr. Galton—just give it a dust with your apron, Jane—and it's well if you haven't worn a hole in the knees of your trousers already."

Jane Perling was lame, and limped very much in her walk, as we have mentioned, and she had not a pretty face; but yet it was a very interesting one. Nineteen men out of twenty would have preferred her sister's features, but if the angels had been asked their opinion, it is probable that they would have reversed the judgment of humanity. There are two sorts of cheerfulness in which the faces of some women are dressed; the one affected, and very unbecoming, which seems to say: "I am trodden upon—I am despised—my feelings are always being injured, yet see how resigned, and even cheerful, I am;" the other is the natural garb of a

chastened spirit. "God has afflicted me," it says, "in His good pleasure, but it is not for me to afflict others with my complainings. I am cut off from many joys, but not from the greatest of all joys—that of striving to make my fellow-creatures happy."

Nothwithstanding her infirmity, Jane Perling was an active, brisk little body, doing the work of two ordinary people in admirable fashion, and when all work was done, down to the most humble tasks, she indulged herself with mixing mentally in the very best of company. Regatta committees and the like took no notice of her, but she entertained at home a select circle invited from her own bookshelf.

She stood silent and blushing, reflecting upon what she had said against Mr. Frederick Galton in his hearing, and wishing it unsaid; but when that young gentleman arose and offered his hand with a pleasant smile, she knew at once that she was forgiven.

"She is my only sister, sir, and very dear to me; so pray excuse what you have heard," observed she simply.

"I don't excuse it, Miss Perling, because I applaud it," returned he warmly. "I hope to earn goodwill from you as genuine as that distrust I have involuntarily incurred. I would far rather have you for my advocate than my antagonist."

Jane returned the pressure of his fingers, but no reply.

"You will do your best to like me after you have got over your dislike?" added he, reading her silence aright.

"Well, I couldn't stop her, you know," pleaded the widow; "and though it was all my fault, why, it's quite a proverb that listeners never do hear any good of themselves. Now, you and Mary stay here while Jane and I get breakfast ready for you in the parlour. I daresay you have plenty to say to one another."

Nor could St. Chrysostom of the golden mouth, nor the eloquent Demosthenes, nor any other agreeable speaker, sacred or profane, have framed a sentence more grateful to the feelings of those to whom it was addressed, than were those few simple words of Widow Perling.

CHAPTER III.

THE VOW.

SINCE even the homely wheelwright's widow had the delicacy to leave the two re-united lovers alone together, it would ill become us to invade their privacy. Suffice it to say that all doubts for the future, all fears, all suspicions, including, perhaps, some vague ones of his own fidelity, were swept away from Frederick Galton's mind in that single moment of ecstasy. My advice to parents and guardians who have made up their minds to be cruel to young people who are consumed with affection for one another, is to keep the two igneous bodies at some distance apart. Let them write to each other if they will, defraying their own postage; let them exchange "kisses" in burning wax—dropped outside the envelopes; let them seal with a cupid, or a

true-lover's knot, if they please, but by all means keep them asunder. One touch of a soft palm—and this is supposing less than generally happens at such interviews—will undo the work of a separation extending over many months; before one flash of a pair of loving eyes, a whole host of prudent resolutions will vanish like an army in the clouds at the stroke of sunlight.

"So you never lost your trust in me, Mary, darling!" cried Frederick in a rapture; "you always told them that I should be true and firm."

"I always *told* them so," said Mary softly, and casting down her lovely eyes, which were dewy; the plentiful moisture encumbered the flower, and weighed down its beautiful head.

"Then you didn't quite believe in me yourself, my own, my"—— Here followed a number of pretty terms.

"I scarcely dared to do so, Frederick, dear, you were so far, far higher than I."

"Nay, love, I have not so far to stoop," replied he

gaily, and I am afraid he illustrated the remark by bringing his lips down on a level with her own.

"I didn't mean *that*," returned Mary simply (and we contend that she *was* simple, against all the Materfamiliases in Christendom who may lay forefinger in rest against her), "I meant that you are a gentleman, and we are but poor people, and—and"——

"My dearest girl, I am as poor as Job, and I fear I shall have to exercise no little of his patience. I have nothing of my own until my father dies, which God forbid should happen!" said Frederick gravely. "You and I, if we marry early, will have to live by the pen."

Mary looked up wondering, as though in some doubt between sheepfolds and the profession of literature.

"I got three pounds sixteen shillings last week for a little contribution to the *Porcupine;* call it four pounds, and there would be two hundred pounds a year at once, if I wrote a paper every week."

The youthful author looked so flushed and confident, that no person with any feeling would have inquired how long he had taken to compose the manuscript in

question, or how many had been written in vain, and were manuscripts—unprinted paper—still.

"It is pleasant, Mary, to gain money by one's own exertions even for one's self; and how much more so must it be when we work for those we love."

"That is just what our Jane says when she churns the butter!" exclaimed Mary. "I used to think it very hard work myself, the few times I tried it, but she says that there is music for her ear in every turn of the handle; and as for putting the prints on, it's a treat, for she cries out: 'That's for mother!' when she stamps the butter with the forget-me-not, and 'That's for Mary!' when she uses the rose. We only keep two cows now; but at one time we had quite a dairy, and Jane used to take the butter to market herself, in a big basket with a cloth over it."

"And did *you* ever take butter to market, Mary?"

"Well, once I did," replied Mary, "and only once, for I didn't quite understand what to do about it; and I had a scarlet cloak on, and they called me Little Red Ridinghood."

"I don't wonder!" exclaimed Frederick with admiration; "and I could eat you up, you darling, as the wolf did who pretended to be her grandmother; I could, indeed." Whereupon ensued more raptures.

Then, after a discreet cough in the passage, Widow Perling came in to say that breakfast was almost ready, and should she show Mr. Frederick to the room to which his carpet-bag had been already taken. Her poor Charlie's room it was, who had been drowned at sea, years and years ago, she said, or matters would be very different with them now in respect to money. He had been an engineer in all manner of outlandish places, at one time even in Turkey; and was thought so highly of, that he was sent for by a great shipping firm at St. Petersburg, and perished on his way thither in a storm. Upon the mantel-piece were some models, neatly executed, of various machines, and one very rude effigy of a fortress, used to hold spills, "the very first model as my poor Charlie ever made." One of the drawers was full of rusty screws and little bolts of

iron, kept as sacred relics; and there was a portrait, very ill executed, of this lost genius of the house of Perling, hanging over the fireplace.

"You must only sleep here a single night," quoth Mrs. Perling; "you must do that, after being deprived of your rest so long, or otherwise I should have liked you to return to Camford at once. You have cured our Mary already, that is evident; and I am so fearful that your being here will get you into a scrape with your schoolmaster, or whatever you call him."

"There will be rather a row, I am afraid," observed Frederick seriously; "but don't you be alarmed, Mrs. Perling. I have done what is right in coming hither, and shall have plenty to say for myself to all inquirers. I should not care much, even though I were expelled from Minim Hall. I could go to London, and earn my own living, if that were all."

"Nay, Mr. Galton, but I trust you will not be thinking of that. It is far easier to talk of such a thing than to do it; and people who have been brought up comfortable, with everything provided for them, have

no idea how difficult are bread, and meat, and clothes to come by, which have seemed such a matter of course. Why, my poor Charlie there, he was in town a month supporting himself upon his own resources—for a certain reason. My poor husband and he had quarrelled about his refusing to be a wheelwright, and stay at Oldborough; and he had a very high spirit, and left his home, just as you might do, and about your own age; and he was a clever young fellow, too, if ever there was one. You may smile, sir, but if you had known him, you would have said so—so modest, and yet so wise and sure as he was. Ah me! ah me! And being brought up simply—although he was never stinted, thank God, in anything—he was better fitted to cope with hard fare and privations than such as you. But he couldn't keep himself in London with all his wits, and he wrote me a letter under the rose—I have it now—to beg me to make up matters with his father; and so I did, the good man being ready enough, and sick for his boy by that time. And so the dear fellow came back, and got his way, and was apprenticed to

the engineering trade, and sent hither and thither on shipboard till—till—till he was drowned, poor lad! It is not well, Master Frederick, I fear it is not well, to go against the wishes of one's friends." And the good widow, unnerved by the reminiscences she had herself evoked, and by the foreboding which she had suggested with respect to Frederick Galton and her daughter, could not help letting fall a tear or two.

"Your son's case and mine are very different," said Frederick, a little stiffly. "Would you have me sacrifice Mary as well as myself to a conventional prejudice? We are both young—well, very young, if you please—and therefore have all the more time to look before us. We plighted troth to one another last winter, and have renewed it, if it wanted renewal, this morning. Winters and summers may come and go first, but your daughter shall be my wife. Be sure of that. If I play her false, may God"——

"Mr. Galton," cried the widow, interrupting him gravely, "do not invoke the curse of Heaven upon

you lightly. I have done what I hope is for the best in bringing you here, but I am not sure—I honestly tell you I am not quite sure that I have done right. I have a mother's love for a daughter threatened with death to plead in my behalf; but you, generous boy, have only the rash, headstrong love of a youth for a maiden. You would never wrong her—the God of the fatherless forbid!—but you may, it is possible, I say, that you *may* be induced to desert her. It does not seem possible now, because you have just seen her, and are about to see her again; but once more separated from her, and worked upon by those who have every right to speak—your uncle, for instance"——

"A liar!" exclaimed Frederick passionately.

"Then your own father—the very mention of his name, see, moves you—has *he* no right to say '*No?*' there being so many, many reasons why he should do so. Therefore, be not rash with thy tongue, and let not thine heart be hasty to call God to witness, since he is in heaven, and thou upon earth."

The widow spoke very gravely, but without a touch

of sanctimoniousness; it was easy to see she was uttering the dictates of her heart.

"I would that my father could hear you speak," replied Frederick earnestly, "for he loves good people."

Mrs. Perling shook her head.

"I am far from good, Mr. Frederick; and if it were otherwise, that would make little matter. Gentlefolks like to marry their sons into good families; but that is another sort of goodness altogether. I can only do what I can. From henceforth, our Mary, since she is going to be yours, shall not disgrace you by doing any handiwork such as girls in her station would have to do, although, indeed, the dear child has ever been as a flower of the field. I shall send her to Lady Ackers's very shortly—for a change of scene is necessary for her—as was first intended; but not as any sort of servant. The housekeeper, Mrs. Mettal, is an old friend of mine, and has her ladyship's licence to act entirely as she pleases with Mary. For the rest," sighed the widow, "we must leave things to take their

course, hoping all will turn out well, and with God's blessing; but"——

"But, but!" exclaimed Frederick impatiently; "why, my good lady, you are all buts. But what?"

"But the breakfast is waiting, and I am hindering you," replied Mrs. Perling, with forced gaiety. "I only spoke to you just those few words, and I wish they had been fewer, since they have put you out, because my heart was very full; but it shall not happen again, Mr. Frederick, during your stay. We are very homely folks, but I hope we may make you comfortable, and that you will enjoy yourself."

And Mr. Frederick Galton did enjoy himself very completely. He remained but a day and a night at the cottage, so that much that might otherwise have struck him as coarse and vulgar, only appeared to him novel; it was less like four-and-twenty hours of actual life, than acting a charade; and, moreover, the principal character of the piece was independent of all accessories, and while she was on the stage, its furnishings were of little moment.

Frederick's presence seemed to have worked a charm upon the invalid beauty, and although she had not previously left her chair by the fire for days, she accompanied him for hours out of doors, not walking, indeed, but sauntering after lovers' fashion. He plucked her a posy in the little garden, and then they strayed through the apple-orchard down to that inevitable summer-house by the river-side. The waters leaped and roared over the weir close by, and it was the last place one would think adapted for conversation, besides being slightly damp; yet they remained there with great content, whispering fondly of the future. It was early June with them, as with the gleaming woods.

They even visited the cow-house, where they found Miss Jane Perling sitting upon a three-legged stool, and employed in an earlier stage of the butter-process than that of churning. "The girl is busy," explained she, "helping mother in the kitchen, and I thought I might make myself useful in this way. Colly knows me, and would not kick upon any account."

Whereupon the gentle creature turned its tender eyes upon its mistress yearningly, and made as though it would caress her with its large rough tongue.

"Even the dumb animals love Jane," said Mary, as she and Frederick sauntered forth beneath the limes; "nor is there a workman yonder who, after his day's labour, would not walk ten miles to please her. I wish I was as good as Jane."

"You are good enough for me, at all events, Mary mine," replied Frederick laughing; "why, you are all excellent people. Your sister is perfect, doubtless; but for my part, I prefer a being just a little short of an angel."

"Nay, don't—don't laugh at Jane, Fred. She will learn to love you in time almost as dearly as I do. Even now she says she does not wonder that you have stolen my whole heart."

"She said that, did she?" cried Frederick greatly pleased. "Then I will try to steal some of hers too."

So, before he left the cottage the next morn-

ing on his return to Camford, he took the lame girl's hand within his own, they being for a moment left together, and "Please unlearn," said he, "some harsh things you have taught yourself respecting me, and tell me what I can do to win your regard."

"My regard is nothing worth, Mr. Galton," returned she with energy; "but if you would have Heaven bless you, do, sir, treat our poor Mary well. You love her now, and ah, how she loves *you!* But after a little, perhaps"——

"My word is solemnly pledged to marry your sister," said Frederick a little stiffly, "and even if my heart were not in accord with it, I should keep my word."

"Yes, you will marry her doubtless; that must be, I see," responded Jane. "But after marriage, bear with her, sir: do not be bitter against her for this and for that." She clasped her fingers tightly together in her passionate prayer. "Remember that you wooed her first; that your very presence was a wooing to

such as she. Her humble birth, her homely bringing-up, you will never visit them on her as though they were crimes — O no, O no. We will not trouble you—neither my mother nor I—we will not, indeed; it would be unsuitable, I know; we must keep apart from her henceforth. Only, if she is ill, sir, you will let us both come then and kiss the cheek that it is yours to caress, but ours to weep over also, in sickness and in sorrow, and which we should love just as well although disease should mar it, or the damps of death were gathering there. God keeps the few he makes like her in His own charge: beware how you harm her; His vengeance will be swift and terrible. But you will not incur it—no, no. Oh, Mr. Galton, promise me that you will treat our Mary well!"

She poured out her appeal with such impetuous rapidity, that he to whom she made it could not have interrupted her, even if he had disregarded her uplifted finger, entreating to be heard; and just as she had finished, Mary herself entered the room, so that reply

was rendered impossible. Then adieux had to be made of a private character; and the widow herself accompanied him on the road to the station, and only left him at the door of the ticket-office. But when Frederick was ensconced in his carriage, the sole first-class passenger from Oldborough, and the bell for starting was ringing, there mixed with the sound a hasty and uneven tread upon the wooden platform, and Jane Perling hurried to the windows.

"You did not promise," she whispered hoarsely and out of breath—"you forgot to give me your sacred promise to treat our Mary well."

"I will do so upon my sacred word of honour, Jane."

"Here is a book; it is all I have to give; but I should like you to accept it, sir. It is the Testament."

"I understand you, Jane," said he. So he took the book, and kissed it, and swore upon it, so help him God, to love and cherish Mary his future wife to his life's end.

CHAPTER IV.

THE PRINCIPAL IN HIS STUDY.

FOR an undergraduate son of Alma Mater to absent himself for two nights and two days without her leave, is a very serious offence; nor is it to be by any means mitigated by the statement that the offender has only gone a-courting. The passion of love is strictly forbidden by university statute; the only legitimate channel for its expression being the construction of Greek sapphics, an outlet only available to classical men. Every tutor is vowed to celibacy; every dean is a priest of Vesta, and if he ever ventures to marry, is immediately buried alive—in some country living. The heads of colleges, it is true, are Benedicts; but they rarely wed until they have reached their grand climacteric, and are only permitted to do so as a caution. It was supposed by the royal and benevolent

founders that such persons would be the very last to sympathize with youthful slaves of the softer passion, and that they would chastise them severely from the genuine conviction that such chastisement would be for their own good.

Mr. Frederick Galton did not expect much sympathy from the venerable chief of Minim Hall, with the feelings that had prompted his unlicensed expedition, and when the porter told him upon his arrival in college that his presence was required at the Lodge without delay, he knew that the interview would be the reverse of agreeable.

"I hope you will come well out of it, sir," said the official, touching his cap; "but the Principal is exceedingly put out. He sent a special messenger to your people yesterday, and your uncle, Mr. Morrit—and well I know him, and a thorough gentleman he is—came to the Lodge last night, and has only left it a couple of hours ago."

"Ah, indeed," replied Frederick thoughtfully; "I am glad you told me this, John."

"I thought it was right you should know, sir; and don't you be too downcast, Mr. Galton, no matter what rigs you may have been running: the Principal will never expel you, I am right sure of that, for let alone what a friend he is of your uncle's, I never saw him take to any young gentleman as he has taken to you. You'll probably be convened—that's all."

"And what's that, John?" inquired Frederick smiling.

"Why, you are politely invited to the Senate-house, and the vice-chancellor sits in a big chair, and gives you a bit of his mind, by way of a keepsake. Only, if you are too early for him, sir, don't sit in the big chair yourself, as Mr. Careless of our Hall did when *he* was convened, because it's considered a liberty."

The porter rubbed his hands with excessive enjoyment at this reminiscence of undergraduate audacity; but Mr. Galton was not so pleased. He was thinking how extremely unpleasant it would be to have to listen to the vice-chancellor's remarks upon his visit to Oldborough, delivered from a chair of state in the Senate-

house. They might expel him if they chose—it would only be beginning his literary life a year or two earlier —but convene him they should not. What other obsolete and curious punishments the authorities might use, he did not know; but he should weigh them well before submitting to them. Milton, it is true, was said to have been whipped at the buttery-hatch of his college; but then he had had no such future before him as was promised to himself; the *Paternoster Porcupine* had not been started, and if it had been, the author of Paradise Lost could never have made his living by the periodicals. In this heroic frame of mind, our truant sought the Lodge, which he had never visited hitherto save as a friendly guest, and was ushered into Dr. Hermann's study.

The Principal was seated at his desk, and waved the young man to a seat at the further end of the room without rising. He looked very grave, and a little pompous, yet there was sorrow in the looks of the learned man, and in his tones also.

"I am very grieved, Mr. Galton—I regret exceed-

ingly that your father's son should have behaved as you have done. I do not hesitate to say that I had begun to entertain for you an unusual regard. I have not been so concerned about an offender *in statu pupillari* for many years. But also, sir, I have scarcely ever before had to take cognisance of so grave an offence. The absenting yourself without leave from any authority of the college for three-and-forty hours—it is monstrous, it is unexampled. I must do my duty, sir; I must not suffer considerations of private friendship to weigh with me one feather."

"I am sure, sir, that you will only do what is right," observed Frederick quietly. He had a genuine liking for Dr. Hermann, and was prepared to be as submissive—in behaviour at least—as possible, since he knew that that sort of incense was very acceptable to the Principal of Minim Hall.

"Now look you here," continued the doctor, mollified by the young man's tone and air. "I do not ask where you have been, or what you have been doing, because there is no necessity for such a question. I know as

well as if I had been told [Frederick bit his lips to prevent a smile] that you have been beguiled by some designing female. I am right, you see. What! I am *not* right? Do you mean to say that you did not leave Minim Hall the night before last in order to visit some —some young person of the opposite sex?"

"I do not deny that, sir," replied Frederick; "but I deny that she is a designing female. In the note I left behind me, addressed to yourself, I said I would explain all to you on my return, without reserve."

"Hush! hold your tongue; be quiet!" whispered the doctor; then raising his voice, he added: "And you found your father well, did you? I am glad to hear it.—There's somebody at the door, I think. Come in."

The door opened just sufficient space to admit the thin face of Mrs. Hermann. "I did not know you were engaged," she said: "you have somebody with you, have you not?"

"Mr. Galton is here," answered the doctor drily.

"Dear me!" exclaimed Euphemia, putting her head

in a little way, and surveying Frederick as sightseers look at murderers in jail.

"Don't rise; pray, don't rise. We thought we should never see you back again. What a very singular thing!"

"Madam," observed the doctor gravely, "I must beg of you to retire. We are talking upon matters of a private nature."

"I wouldn't interrupt you for the world," replied the lady earnestly, her eyes reiterating their first inquiry. We wonder what this young gentleman can have been at? "I hope there is nothing serious, Principal?"

"Nothing at all, madam. Please to close the door."

Euphemia obeyed; but not until the rustle of her silk-gown had died away in the passage did the doctor resume the conversation. "Your letter," said he, "fell by mistake into my wife's hands. Having seen so much more of you than is customary in the case of other young men, she is naturally interested: it is most important, however, that the nature of your offence should not transpire. The shock to a person of Mrs.

Hermann's sensitiveness would—— Dear me, a designing female of inferior condition—and, goodness gracious, what a child! Why, do you know, young sir, that I did not marry, myself—I did not dream of marrying—until I was old enough to be your grandfather?"

Frederick was perfectly aware of this fact, but his features expressed the amount of astonishment that seemed to be demanded.

"I fell in love when I was a boy like you, of course, and I scrambled out of it again, not without some trouble.—But to leave Minim Hall without permission, for two days and nights, on account of being in love!" The doctor's breath was fairly taken away by the contemplation of this enormity, notwithstanding that it had presented itself upon one or two occasions before. "Why, do you know, Mr. Frederick Galton, that youths have been expelled from college for less crimes?"

"I have committed no crime, Dr. Hermann," quoth Frederick boldly; "although my uncle has, doubtless,

placed my conduct before you in its worst light. I have simply made up my mind to marry a certain young lady."

"Young lady?" exclaimed the Principal, arching his eyebrows.

"Young woman, then, if you please, sir," responded the young man with flashing eyes: "at all events, she will be my wife."

"But if you are expelled?" observed the doctor tentatively, for he had begun to lose faith as respected this particular case in the very strongest medicines to be found in the university-chest—"what would you do then?"

"In all probability, I should marry her at once," replied the undaunted undergraduate.

"This is dreadful!" exclaimed the Principal soliloquising. "This is worse than anything I ever heard of! The poor dear boy has lost his wits, and is simply mad to get married, that is all.—Now, listen to me, Galton, and remember who I am."

"I remember perfectly well, sir," said Frederick

smiling. "The Principal of my college, and a gentleman who has been very kind to me."

"And who wishes to be kinder still," replied the doctor in a tone of genuine pity; "pray, believe that and more, or you will think I have no right to tell you what I am about to tell. I have no son of my own, as you know, Frederick Galton; and I protest my heart yearns towards you as though I were your father. My friend Morrit's relationship made me take some interest in you at the first, but I soon got to like you on your own account. Everybody likes you, lad. I do not say it to flatter you, but only because it is the truth. You are a favourite with women and with men. Euphemia has taken a great fancy to you, which is not usual with her, I assure you; very far from it. Miss de Lernay—you may well blush—has something more than a fancy for you, unless I am much deceived. Her father, an admirable judge of human nature, speaks of you with enthusiasm. As you advance in life, you will make a multitude of friends useful to you, and conducive to your happiness in every way; but by making

a low marriage, you will paralyse this faculty of yours at the outset. You will see, too, many, many persons of the other sex, who might have made a far better wife than she with whom you are now infatuated, and would have been willing to have become so. Your circle of female acquaintance has hitherto been ridiculously narrow. Beware lest hereafter you shall involuntarily make invidious comparisons when it is too late. Have you ever compared, for instance, this young person you have in your mind with Eugenie de Lernay?"

The unexpectedness of this inquiry would perhaps have been sufficient of itself to heighten Frederick's colour, but not, as the doctor rightly concluded, to turn him scarlet. "I love a simple village maiden who loves me in return, sir," returned Frederick simply, after a little pause. "She is above me in many things—in purity, in unselfishness, in goodness of all kinds; and she is beneath me in nothing in which I am not also at least as inferior to Miss de Lernay. I answer your question, but I feel that I have no right to speak of that young lady in that way."

"Being a high-born damsel," remarked the doctor, "a lady of exquisite grace and manners, and the daughter of one who has been the ornament of courts, and has a right to look higher for an alliance for her than to the son of a village doctor. Some notion of this kind has probably crossed your mind, although never seriously, your affections being otherwise engaged."

"Well, really, sir, it seems absurd to give expression to such folly, but my imagination is not always under my control, and I confess that such an idea may have once or twice occurred to me, to my shame."

"Exactly," replied the doctor coolly; "and I don't wonder either. "Then he rose from his chair, opened the door, and looked into the passage, to be sure there were no listeners, locked it, and then resumed his seat with the gravest air. "I am going to tell you, Frederick Galton, a certain secret, which involves the honour of a noble family, but the telling of which will also, I believe, conduce to its happinesss as to yours. It is a strange and terrible story although true in every

particular, and I know that it will be as safe in your custody as in my own; nay, safer; for it is impossible that you can have the same reason as now presses upon me to divulge it to another.

CHAPTER V.

THE LOST SISTER.

"I AM not a good story-teller, like Monsieur de Lernay," commenced Dr. Hermann, smiling sadly, "and I dare say I shall have now and then to refer to these faded leaves." He drew out from is desk a little packet of ancient letters, written in a female hand, and opened them reverently, one by one. "These are from my only sister, Emmeline, now with God, who despatched them to me from the very house where the circumstance I am about to relate took place, and at the very time of its occurrence. The date is some years ago, the locality is the south of France, and the *dramatis personæ* are chiefly a certain Count Lamotte and his two daughters. My sister, who was of a very independent spirit"—here the doctor sighed—"was

governess to the younger of the children, Julie, and companion to the elder, Marguerite. She preferred to earn her own living in that manner—although Heaven knows there would always have been a home for her with me—and to do so abroad rather than at home. Count Lamotte was far from rich, nor was he liked by my sister; but smallness of salary and some other disagreeables were more than atoned for, in her eyes by the friendship of Marguerite Lamotte. She was older than this girl by twenty years, old enough to be her mother and as a mother she loved, she doted on her. It is hard to judge of beauty by description, but the loveliness of Marguerite must have been something greatly beyond the common. Fairer far, be sure, than the siren who is now beckoning you to shipwreck, ere you have left the very shore of life; fairer than Eugenie de Lernay, for my sister knew her, and has told me so; fairest, indeed, as it would seem, of womankind. They lived in a small country-house, apart from society, for the count had mingled with the best in more prosperous times, and it

did not suit his pride to associate with the little land-owners about him. There was one immense château, indeed, in their neighbourhood belonging to a great lord, but this was rarely occupied. Its master did not affect pastoral pleasures, and no tenant could be found rich enough to pay the rent of so princely a residence. So the days in Lozere passed very quietly under the shadow of the Cevennes and by the banks of the growing Garonne, so that one would have thought that the very last spot in France for romance to visit would have been that apparently unambitious household. I say apparently, because its head was secretly for ever scheming and contriving how to regain his place in the gay world, which he had lost through his own extravagances, and was often away from the family in Paris for weeks and weeks.

"During that time his constant theme was the beauty of his daughter Marguerite—the Lily of Lozere, as the country people called her; and he was always regretting that he had not the money to bring her out in Paris, even for one season, in a manner befitting

her rank and lineage. The girl herself would rally him playfully about this, complaining that no royal personage had sought her in marriage; but her father was very serious in his sorrow, and really looked upon her as a legitimate means of re-establishing the fortunes of his fallen house. They talk of these things in France in a more open manner than we do, although, perhaps, English fathers are not less selfish than French ones. Moreover, you must not suppose that the count did not love his daughter; he adored her with an affection as genuine as his pride itself. Now, after my sister had resided with the Lamotte family nearly two years, and when Julie was about eleven years of age, and Marguerite nineteen, a great event happened in the district: the Château Florac, which I have mentioned as having been so long without a tenant, was taken by a Monsieur Dubois. This gentleman must needs have possessed great wealth to have hired so noble a domain at all, but it was evident that he was a millionaire at least—a description of person less common in France than with us, and quite unknown in

the simple district of Lozere—for, not content with the splendid furniture of the mansion, which was kept up in all respects as though its owner was resident, he entirely redecorated all the reception-rooms. This was the more wonderful, since it was understood that he had only taken the house upon a short lease.

"Moreover, he did not seem anxious that the neighbours should admire his magnificence. A fête or two—when all the fountains so long sealed up were set a-playing, and the gardens glowed with the hues of rarer flowers than had ever before graced their parterres—did indeed delight the neighbours upon Monsieur Dubois's first arrival. They wandered through the suites of elegant apartments, vainly endeavouring to price the costly furniture; they were admitted as a favour to gaze in at the divan which their host had erected close to his own chamber; and they were entertained with dishes the nature of which they could not guess at, but the taste whereof was ravishing to the palate. But these joys were few and fleeting. Greatly as the Lozere folks were impressed with Monsieur Dubois,

the feeling was not reciprocal. He soon grew tired of their admiration, their dulness, their unsophisticated views of life, and shut himself up in the Château Florac with his secretary and his Nubian servants. Yes, Monsieur Dubois's personal attendants were two blacks of saturnine appearance, and a gentleman who was called his secretary, but who might have been termed his shadow. Wherever Monsieur Dubois moved, *he* moved; when he rode out, he accompanied him half a horse's head behind; when he drove he sat on his left hand; when he whispered soft nothings to the Lozere ladies at his entertainments, the secretary overheard them as certainly as the ears for which they were intended.

"This conduct did not seem to excite his master's indignation in the least, however embarrassing it might sometimes be to the third party. He seemed to acquiesce in it as one of the disadvantages of his own greatness. It was not becoming that a person of his rank and importance should ever be without some confidential attendant. Of Monsieur Dubois's importance, if wealth can confer it, there could be no doubt;

but as to his rank, there were infinite uncertainty and suggestion. He professed to be a French gentleman who had passed much of his time in the East, since its luxury suited him, and even its system of misrule. He avowed himself a despot, and openly advocated a form of government under which a rich man might behave pretty much as he pleased. Laws, he said, were excellent in their way, but only adapted for the lower orders. His behaviour, too, certainly gave the impression of a character born to be obeyed. Still, there were not wanting folks, and particularly after the fêtes at the Château Florac had been discontinued, who averred that its new tenant was a *nouveau riche*, and who affected to detect provincialisms in his speech. Certainly his French was not Parisian; but this his supporters ascribed to the fact of his long residence in foreign lands, and protested that for their parts, they thought such little peculiarities made him all the more distinguished. As for his being dark, and, indeed, almost copper-coloured, who that had so long experienced the burning suns of Egypt would not have suffered in his complexion? He

had spent much time in dilettante examinations of the Pyramids, and explorations of Libyan burying-places —at that period a much more expensive and rare pursuit than at present; and what wonder was it if he had himself grown just a little like the mummies which he had exhumed! Several apartments in the Château Florac were dedicated to these spoils of the ancient dead. The painted boxes, with hieroglyphics and figures on them, which their owner could read like letter-press; the Egyptian deities, which crowded his shelves, with some dread history attached to each; the garlands of amaranth and the palm rods placed in vain by reverent hands upon their beloved Departed tens of centuries ago: all these struck an awe in their beholders, from which the most splenetic of the once invited were not wholly exempt. How much more, then, must all these wonders have wrought with those who still enjoyed Monsieur Dubois's condescending hospitality.

"This gentleman had made a particular exception in his self-withdrawal from Lozere society in favour of the

Lamotte family. The count was the only man who was capable of appreciating his conversation, and who could be his friend without sinking into a flatterer.

"If he was not wealthy, he had once been so, and life at the Château Florac was accepted and enjoyed by him in a natural manner, without that slavish gratitude which marks the dull and ill-bred when partaking of the hospitalities of the great. He behaved like a man who is well-pleased with his entertainment, but at the same time is conscious that he has brought his welcome with him.

"If the conversation in the divan after dinner was not always edifying, it was doubtless agreeable and well sustained; even the secretary's dumb and spiritless presence had no power to chill the lively eloquence of Lamotte, who under the influence of good fare and good company, would have made himself pleasant to Pharaoh Necho himself, smothered in seventy-fold bandages. Dubois, for the most part, let him talk on, throwing in an intelligent observation here and there, to convince him of his attention; and by this means

won the regard of a guest whom it was not easy to dazzle by mere splendour.

"The count, who was rarely depressed at any time, positively appeared to grow young again under these prosperous circumstances, and blessed the hour when Monsieur Dubois first shone upon his obscurity.

"'What you came hither for, friend, unless guided by my good genius for my own special behoof, I cannot guess,' observed he to his entertainer one day, as they lounged as usual in the smoking apartment, each with a piece of amber in his mouth, and the bowl of his pipe at infinite distance. 'Why on earth did you take this Château Florac, when you could have hired the Tuileries, had you been so disposed?'

"Why did I go to Egypt, to be bitten with insects, to be poisoned with indifferent food, to be bored with idiotic interviews by stolid pashas?' returned Dubois. "I have no reason for anything I do, but only whim. It is never any use asking me questions; I am a fool, but then I can afford to pay for my folly.'

"The host spoke with gaiety, and the guest listened

with a smile; yet the former meant very seriously that he did not wish to be cross-examined upon his motives, and the latter understood him to mean so. That is the great advantage of living in good society; we learn to perceive, with a sort of delicate attraction of repulsion, what others dislike, and avoid it without the least collision: the magnet informs us that we are cruising in the dangerous vicinity of some loadstone rock, and we put the helm about immediately. This admirable system of social intercourse has, however, its disadvantages. It is impossible to ask for explanations (except at the sword's point), or to inquire for what we call in England 'respectable references' as to character—even when one's own daughter's happiness is concerned in the matter. It had for some time become evident to Count Lamotte that Monsieur Dubois had set his affections upon Marguerite, notwithstanding his polite and frigid demeanour towards her; indeed, it was the absence of the light and jesting manner which the tenant of the château adopted with regard to other females, which chiefly made apparent his preference for

the Lily of Lozere. It was for the better prosecution of his suit, as the count shrewdly suspected, that Monsieur Dubois had given up his great entertainments. Among the very few guests who were now invited, he could pay his attentions sufficiently often to Mademoiselle Lamotte without exciting remark.

"It is my sister who is speaking, of course," explained Dr. Hermann parenthetically, looking at Frederick over the top of his gold spectacles, and then reverting to the open letters before him.

"I understood as much," observed the young man, smiling inwardly at the notion of the Principal of Minim Hall improvising a romance.

"And I think," added the doctor, "it would be more intelligible if I continued the story in her own words."

"I always made one of the party invited to the Château Florac, and was invariably treated with the greatest consideration by its master. Still, I never liked him, even on my own account, and still less as respected his behaviour to my dear girl. He would address to her the most extravagant compliments with

his features clothed in smiles, which he gave himself no trouble to render natural. If he had worn a mask, it could not have been more evident that he was playing a part. At this, I was greatly indignant. Was this man so wealthy that he could afford to bid for a young gentlewoman, as for a mere picture, with his money only, and without the pretence even of ordinary admiration? He spoke of her indeed to me and to her father with the highest eulogies, but no trace of his entertaining such sentiments was to be observed in his manner. This, said the count, was the Grand Air, and should rather convince us of the high station which our host must always have occupied in life. Love as understood by the lower orders, he assured me, was totally ignored in courts. He had made inquiries in Paris concerning Monsieur Dubois, and they had been eminently satisfactory. It was not indeed known exactly who he was; but the owner of the Château Florac had received from the ambassador of a foreign court the very highest testimonials regarding his tenant; while his command of money was evidently well-nigh boundless. 'My

daughter,' said the count, 'will yet enjoy the position to which she was born, and for which nature has so eminently fitted her.' It was curious to see the Frenchman's pride overcoming his genuine paternal love, and to hear him talk in the same breath of Nature; but it was also very sad. Marguerite could not, of course, be ignorant of these aspirations of her father, and they gave her great concern. She, poor girl, was not, I dare say, without her ambition, but she had certainly no wish to marry Monsieur Dubois. She would not have liked him better, perhaps, even had he behaved towards her as a lover should; but it was impossible for any but an inhabitant of the Emerald Island to reciprocate an affection which evidently did not exist in the other party. When the offer of his hand was made at last, it was made to the count over the chibouques, and he was the first to communicate it to his daughter that same evening.

"'You will now have a husband every way worthy of you,' was the count's rather sweeping eulogy. 'I congratulate you, my Lily, with all my soul.'

"'Is it Monsieur Dubois, or his secretary, my father?' inquired Marguerite, smiling coldly.

"'My darling, what a question!' returned the count. 'What is the secretary to us?'

"'Nothing, father, that I know of; but he is everything to Monsieur Dubois—I protest that the gentleman who has done me the honour of proposing to marry me has never addressed me save in the presence of that attendant; and I honestly believe that the one has as great (and as little) regard for me as the other.'

"'The true and lasting love,' observed the count demurely, 'only comes after marriage. So great a man as Monsieur Dubois—I have his word that he will settle a million of francs upon you; and see! he has begged our acceptance of one hundred thousand francs, in order that nothing may be wanting in the furnishing forth of my Lily, and that the family may make such an appearance in the meantime as may not disgrace such an alliance—so great a man, I say, dare not commit himself, even in love-making, lest by any accident he should meet with a rejection. Not, indeed,

that I suppose any girl in France would be so mad, so blind as to say No—I may add, so undutiful; since no father could be otherwise than satisfied with the prospect of such a son-in-law. My Lily weeps at the idea of parting with her beloved parent, with her sweet Julie, with her dear and admirable Miss Hermann; but I am certain—yes, I feel certain that she is sensible of the greatness of the offer that has been made to her, and that she will accept it thankfully.'

"'Whatever pleases my father will plea—— will seem right to me,' replied Marguerite with a great effort. And the count kissed her with devotion, and betook himself to his sleeping apartment, and the most charming dreams.

"But Marguerite Lamotte and I passed no such night; and not until the grey dawn touched the mountain tops, did she close her weeping eyes and sob herself to rest at last upon this bosom."

CHAPTER VI.

THE KIDNAPPERS.

"NOTHING more passed between the count and his daughter concerning her engagement with Monsieur Dubois. It was silently acquiesced in by all parties. It was fortunate, perhaps, that the bridegroom-elect was not exacting as to public demonstrations of affection; while as to private ones, the opportunity never occurred. The inevitable secretary—calm, imperturbable, dull—dogged the footsteps of his master as an engaged man, even more than he had done so when he was fancy free.

"'Monsieur Barbette will not accompany you on your marriage tour, I conclude, Dubois?' said the count one day, with the nearest approach to a sarcasm that he had ever hazarded to his future son-in-law.

"'Most certainly he will,' Monsieur Dubois had

answered. 'My travelling-carriage is built for three inside.'

"The count shrugged his shoulders until they touched the tips of his ears.

"'Everybody to their liking, my friend. Since your ideas are so peculiar, it is useless to ask you to take a French valet, or at least a white man [Monsieur Dubois's dark face turned several degrees more dusky], instead of your Nubians; for my daughter's maid, Kathleen, an ignorant Irish girl, but true as steel, has taken the greatest horror of them.'

"'And what has your daughter's maid to do with my Nubians?' inquired Monsieur Dubois coldly.

"'Nothing; except so far that as they are to be fellow-travellers'——

"'Fellow-travellers!' ejaculated Monsieur Dubois with amazement. 'Where? Whither? What do you mean?'

"'You do not suppose that *my* daughter—Marguerite Lamotte—will leave my house as your bride without an attendant?' returned the count with labo-

rious distinctness. 'I do not know much of Monsieur Dubois, but I should hope it was not necessary to point out to him the absolute necessity of such an arrangement.' The tenant of the Château Florac turned livid, as the count supposed, with rage; but the blood of the Lamottes was roused in the latter gentleman. 'Thousand devils!' continued he, 'you cannot stir without your secretary, and yet you will not permit my daughter to travel in a manner befitting her station!'

"There was a dry husky cough, such a cough as is confided to the hand before the mouth is opened for a falsehood, and the secretary, who had entered the room without the least noise, was heard to remark: 'Make no difficulty, my master, pray; let us take the young woman also, by all means.'

"'We will take her, then. Kathleen shall accompany madame,' said Dubois hurriedly.

"'Sir,' returned the count, with a lofty air, 'I thank you; I feel under the greatest obligations—to your secretary.'

"A lasting coolness sprang up between Monsieur

Lamotte and his intended son-in-law out of this trifling matter; but it unhappily never went so far as to disturb the matrimonial project. The advantages upon the side of the count were too great and immediate to be relinquished; and, indeed, I believe he had already spent a portion of that large sum in ready money with which Monsieur Dubois had presented him. The day of the nuptials was appointed, and it drew nigh with frightful speed; this was not that the intervening time was a happy one—far from it; but because it was precious to us all, and incalculably so, with reference to that which lay beyond. The father knew that he had sold his daughter to a stranger without a heart; the girl herself had not one single ray of hope to cheer her in the contemplation of her future. I understood the wretchedness of both of them, and shared it. My Marguerite was proud to most persons, but not to me. She did not attempt for an instant to conceal from me her utter misery, one half of which only was caused by the thought of becoming Madame Dubois, the other half by the thought of leaving home.

All that she loved, all that she knew in the wide world was comprised within the walls of our little house; she had no other relatives save Julie and her father, no other friend but me.

"Her husband was about to carry her away at once to what seemed to her a distant part of the earth.

"It was the very time, he said, for a tour in the East; and a steam-yacht was already waiting at Marseilles, to carry them up the Mediterranean.

"'If I could only die at once,' cried she, 'instead of lingering on, it may be, for months of misery, how thankful should I be! What is life to me with'—she could not even pronounce his name, but only shuddered. 'How can I live away from all that is dear to me!' She looked forth from the window upon the beloved home-scene, the valley still rich with green, though the winter was far advanced, and the Cevennes were white with snow. 'O why, just Heaven! did this man come here to turn my happiness to sorrow? I did not know how happy, how blessed I was—and

now it is too late! Emmeline, watch over Julie when I am gone. Let her never thus be sacrificed. One sister is enough to be offered up to Mammon. How wretched, too, is my poor father; and when I am gone, it will be worse for him. Do not let him reproach himself, dear friend; comfort him all you can. Ah, if we were but rich!'

"Thus did the dear girl outpour her heart on the very night before her wedding-day. The ceremony was as imposing as the count could make it. Monsieur Dubois had counselled, nay, had entreated that all things should be conducted in as private a manner as possible; but his father-in-law for once had overruled him. Since the affair was scarcely a love-match, it should at least reflect credit upon the family, and fill the bosoms of his neighbours with unappeasable envy.

"The congratulations he received from all the guests were of the most extravagant description.

"'The young madame would be nothing less than a princess,' they said. And a princess she looked.

Her bridal attire was splendid and costly enough for any rank, and she moved with all the stateliness of a queen. Not a touch of colour could be traced in her noble features; yet she never looked more beautiful—more like the Lily of Lozere.

"To the spectators, she seemed only haughty, stiffened with native pride, and sudden elevation to fortune; while in truth she was only *frozen over*—a glittering show, beneath which lay a breaking heart and unutterable wretchedness.

"When Julie put a bouquet into her gloved hands, I saw them tremble, and the fingers clutch the flowers rather than close upon them; but she never gave way; no, not even when the good-bye came, and her father's own eyes glistened with sorrow and secret remorse. Only as the travelling-carriage drove to the door, she looked round with a sharp anxious glance for Kathleen, who, with a nod of loving reassurance, seated herself upon the rumble.

"Inside, with his back to the horses, sat the inevitable secretary, at which arrangement the good folks

of Lozere could not conceal their unsophisticated astonishment.

"'Faix and it's myself that's glad he is not here,' remarked Kathleen in reply to one who suggested that he should have been her travelling-companion; 'and likewise that they have not set me by one of them Nubians.'"

"This faithful creature entertained the most honest and profound dislike not only for the Nubians, and the secretary, but for her new master also, whom, she went so far as to tell me, she believed to be the Father of Evil himself, very inadequately disguised. Her grounds for this conviction were manifold; but she mainly relied upon his peculiar colour and ugliness; his keeping a familiar—the secretary; and his disinclination even so much as to take the hand of that innocent and spotless lady her mistress within his own. 'The devil, we all know,' said she, 'or at least all we good Catholics do, Miss Emmeline—the devil hates holy water, and for some similar reason this black gentleman dare not approach Miss Marguerite—thanks

be to Heaven! Why, nobody that was a *man* could have helped falling in love with such a darling at the very first sight; and here he has been courting her these three months, and never ventured to put his ugly lips to her beautiful brow: that is not what *I* call courting, Miss Emmeline; and you may take my word for it that there's something uncanny about such work. Perhaps he's waiting until she does something wrong, before he dare get fond of her: he'll have to wait a weary time for that, for Miss Marguerite's an angel. But anyway, I'll keep my eye upon him. *I'm* not too good, Heaven be praised, to be a match for anybody.'

"And, indeed, Kathleen was my only hope in this calamity, as she was the sole prop and stay of her unfortunate young mistress.

"Where the count had engaged her, I cannot tell; but he had certainly been most fortunate in securing her as an attendant for his daughters, the younger of whom she had had the charge of almost from infancy. Nothing but her devotion to the family, and to Marguerite in particular, would have induced her to

make one of the travelling household of Monsieur Dubois; but having once made up her mind to accompany her mistress, I felt the strongest confidence that Kathleen would never desert her. It seemed little enough protection for a poor girl in such a position; but Marguerite herself clung to it with touching tenacity, so as almost to cause, as we have seen, a quarrel between her father and Monsieur Dubois; and in the end it turned out of the utmost service.

"A loving heart that is also brave, can accomplish much for the object of its affections and against great odds. Kathleen Maloney, looked upon in this light, could be relied on to overcome almost everything except foreign languages. Although she had lived in France so many years, she discoursed in the French tongue almost as imperfectly as an Indian ayah speaks English, and would invariably address her remarks to a stranger, even in Lozere, in pure Milesian, in the forlorn-hope that he might be a compatriot.

"Upon the arrival of this singularly-composed wedding-party at Marseilles, which they reached on the

same evening, the happy pair, or rather trio—for the secretary never left them—sat down at their hotel to a splendid repast, of which, however, the poor bride could not swallow a single mouthful. While thus engaged, her scarcely less unhappy attendant wandered out into the bustling town. Perhaps she had a natural passion for sight-seeing, and understanding that they were to leave the port next morning, she opined that no time was to be lost in reconnoitring; or perhaps the faithful creature thought that she might acquire some knowledge which might be made useful to her beloved mistress. She turned her steps towards the quay, where the great fleet of shipping lay as distinguishable under the clear starlit sky as in the daytime, and strove to guess at which among them all the vessel might be which was fated to carry them so soon to unknown shores. Even France appeared like home in comparison to such a dreaded bourne.

"'Can you tell me, young man,' inquired she of one with a good-natured face, and appearance a little superior to the maritime population thereabouts, 'which

of these boats here is the steam-yacht bound for the East to-morrow morning? I am a stranger here myself entirely,' added she in pathetic apology.

"'That's clear,' answered the man, holding out his hand, which Kathleen seized in a rapture. 'Why, who on earth would have thought of meeting an Irish-woman in Marseilles' port, within an hour or two of midnight too! It is neither right or safe, my lass, that you should be here.'

"'Leave Kathleen Maloney alone for taking care of herself,' replied the undaunted girl; 'although, indeed, if I wanted help you're just the boy to give it me: it was your kind English eyes which made me speak to you, sir. And now, pray tell me which is the steam-yacht, that I may look upon it, and see whether it is like a coffin outside, as it should be, for it will carry me and my dear mistress both to our deaths, I know.'

"'But where do you expect it to take you in the meantime, my good girl? I thought you said it was bound for the East?'

"'Ay, to Egypt or some such place: to the house of

bondage, as it has well been written; a land full o taskmasters, and wickedness too, if them Nubians came from it, I'll warrant. Is that the ship, sir?'

"The stranger pointed towards a trim-looking vessel, built evidently for speed, but with much more external decoration about it than was usual: the port-holes were larger—more like windows—and neatly painted, and its appearance altogether was liveable, and even luxurious.

"'It is a pretty thing enough,' observed Kathleen mournfully; 'but for my part, I would rather be set on board a coal-barge, with its figure-head pointing towards old Ireland.'

"'And that's a pleasant thing to say,' returned the young fellow, laughing, 'when I myself am engineer of that same steam-yacht, and you will enjoy the great advantage of my society upon the voyage.'

"'What! Do you belong to her? You, an honest Englishman. Then praised be the saints! But, arrah, jewel, tell me all about her, do; and who is this Monsieur Dubois, who owns her, and his secretary,

Monsieur Barbette; for you cannot guess how much of comfort or misery may hang upon your answer.'

"'Well, the fact is, it's secret service. You see I am bound not to tell my employer's secrets; but I may say this much, since it is known to every sailor in Marseilles, that Monsieur Dubois is no more her owner than I am. The *Irene* belongs to the Porte.'

"'Oh, it's a Marseilles boat, is it? Then I suppose Monsieur Dubois has only hired it?'

"'Nay, nay, girl,' returned the young man, greatly amused; 'it is the Sublime Porte that I mean. She belongs to the Sultan.'

"'What! the Grand Turk?' cried Kathleen, clasping her hands. 'Mother of Heaven, this is dreadful! What can it all mean? Look you, sir,' pleaded she, while tears rolled down her cheeks, 'I have not a friend in all this town, except my dear young mistress, and she has no other friend than I. She has been married this day to Monsieur Dubois, whom she hates, and I hate; and what is much more singular is, that Monsieur Dubois does not love her, never addresses her

even, save in the presence of Monsieur Barbette. There is something strange and cruel about it all. There is some unspeakable wretchedness overhanging my dear Miss Marguerite. O sir, if you have a mother, a sister, pity us! Tell me what this man is, and to what misfortunes we are hurrying.'

"'I have a mother and two little sisters at home, returned the young man, deeply moved, 'and for their sakes I will do your bidding. If I do lose my situation through it, what matters? While wits and hard work command their wages, Charles Perling is not a man to starve.'"

Frederick started from his seat. "Charles Perling!" exclaimed he.

"Yes, that is the name," continued Dr. Hermann; "that is certainly the name, although the ink in which it is written has much faded. Did you ever know him? He must have been a fine young fellow."

"No, sir; I never knew him; but I have heard of him from those who loved him dearly. Pray go on, sir."

"'God will never let you starve,' returned Kathleen earnestly, 'if you will only help us in our need.'

"'As to help, my good girl, you shall have the best that I have to offer, though I am afraid it will be worth but little; but I will at least warn you of your danger. The government which I serve is not like other governments; there is always something tricky and underhand going on, either for or against the master. He is a vicious and abandoned prince, and such have always wicked ministers ready to do their will for pay. Monsieur Dubois is one of these, and Monsieur Barbette is another. Now, answer me truly one question. Is your young mistress very beautiful?'

"'She is more lovely than any human creature I ever saw,' returned Kathleen slowly; 'fit to be an angel, just as she is.'

"'Then it's my opinion,' returned the young man gravely, 'that her marriage with Dubois is all a mockery. He and Barbette are carrying her to Constantinople to make their bargain with the Sultan;

they have been applying—the scoundrels!—their Circassian principles to France, and they mean to get a high price for their western wife, no doubt.'

"For a moment or two, the keen instincts of Kathleen quite deserted her; the magnitude of the impending danger, the unimaginable wickedness of the plot deprived her of all power of reflection, and blank despair took the place of terror. But revived by the water which Charles Perling sprinkled on her cheeks, and still more by his soothing and friendly tones, she was gradually enabled to look the lowering future in the face.

"'You will not suffer this great wrong to be done,' said she solemnly; 'you will help me all you can?'

"'I will, I will,' returned he; 'but I do not see what is to be done. You are the head, I am only the hands.'"

CHAPTER VII.

THE MORAL OF IT.

"'I WILL go home and warn my mistress,' said Kathleen, after a little thought; 'come with me, and I will show you the window of her chamber. She will inform the landlord of the hotel, and he will not dare but be on our side. We shall return, thank Heaven, and my dear young mistress—the Lily of Lozere, they call her—will see her home once more.'

"'But if the landlord disbelieves you?' urged the engineer. 'The whole story will seem impossible—a mere fiction. Dubois is rich, which goes a great way with landlords. What will you do then?'

"'Nay, it is what will *you* do then?' returned Kathleen solemnly. 'You alone, in that case, must be our trust. You will not desert us, because you believe in

a God. Have you no friends here—not your own messmates, but others—among the Marseilles folks, I mean?'

"'I have acquaintances: we foreigners,' replied the young man, 'find it hard to make our way to people's hearts. But I know a dozen men, Frenchmen, who if I told them what we know—what is going on in their own town here—— But that would never do; they would breed a riot.'

"'What of that?' cried Kathleen eagerly. 'Let them burn the town down, so that I save Miss Marguerite. Look you, there is a drinking-house just opposite to our hotel. Take them there and treat them. Here is money—or I can bring you thrice as much.'

"'Put up your purse, my good girl,' returned the other; 'I am not wealthy, but I can afford to stand treat upon such an occasion. No true Marseillaise will refuse supper and brandy. Well, I will give my entertainment at the wine-shop opposite.—What then?'

"'Listen: I will show you the window; watch, and if you see my face at it, bring out your friends—to look at the moon, the state of the weather, or to smoke—no matter upon what pretence. Then if you see me wave my handkerchief—thus—tell them that in their native place, in Marseilles, a young girl, their own countrywoman, is being plotted against by a wicked knave, who is carrying her off to sell her. Then let the landlord, since he has been deaf to us, hear *them;* let him look to his windows, his furniture. He will soon be won over to our side, I warrant him. And O sir, if you happened in the turmoil to come across Dubois or Barbette—they're sure to be together—will you remember what villany they intended, and what my poor mistress has suffered?'

"'Ay, that will I,' cried the young man with vehemence. 'I will strike once, and not lightly, for this Lily; and once, my good lass, for the shamrock of old Ireland, which is a very pretty flow
gendarmes will arrive to a certain
sent to prison; but what of

has it never struck you to inform *them* in the first instance—to send for the police at once?'

"'Ah no,' replied Kathleen gravely. 'The Palers are a bad lot entirely all the world over. Sure they're always for the rich people against us poor folks. They would let this Dubois slip through their fingers if he only greased their palms with enough golden ointment. And besides, if we applied to the Law, the whole matter must be made public, and if this can be avoided, so much the better: Miss Marguerite would die of shame. I have good hope, too, that there need not be a riot after all. This Dubois is a coward, or my name is not Kathleen Maloney.'

"'Very well, Kathleen; I am off to invite my friends to this entertainment, since there is no time to be lost. In half an hour you may count upon me to have collected a score of as hairbrained fellows as can be picked up in the Show your face and it will [illegible] of [illegible] your [illegible]te handle[illegible] "We [illegible], as I read [illegible]ily,

once in a stage-play belonging to my little sister Jane.'

"'O Sir, if you suffer for our sake, she will never forgive me, and I shall never forgive myself.'

"'You do not know my sister Jane,' replied Charles Perling, simply, 'or you would know she would forgive anything. I am not sure about her countenancing a riot, indeed,' soliloquised he aloud, 'but I don't see any other way that promises better.' Then he looked at the steam-yacht, and shook his curly Saxon locks regretfully. 'I do not think I shall ever set foot upon *your* deck again, bonny bark. But no matter; *au revoir*, Kathleen.'

"'Sure if it's a kiss you're asking for, you shall have it,' answered Miss Maloney with a little sob. 'And if I can remember your name, which I am but a bad hand at, you shall never be forgotten in my prayers, you broth of a boy.'

"The young engineer accompanied the girl to the hotel, and she pointed out to him the supper-room, which was still brilliantly illuminated.

"'My mistress is there still,' said she, pointing to the shadow of a drooping head: 'therefore, one of those two will be the window at which I will stand.'

"Charles Perling, upon his part, secured an apartment at the café opposite, which commanded the desired view.

"Upon entering her hotel, Miss Kathleen Maloney gave certain orders as emanating from her master, which, although they must have evoked some surprise, were received with polite acquiescence. The servants of gentlemen travelling *en prince* are rarely disobeyed. Then going to the chamber of her mistress, she selected some articles of apparel, money, and a bonnet and shawl, and placed them in a bundle on a table that stood on the landing at the top of the stairs. After completing these arrangements, she entered the first-floor chamber, occupied by her betters, without the least hesitation or *mauvaise honte;* but it was certainly a great relief to her to find her beloved Miss Marguerite sitting there all alone.

"'They have gone out,' observed her mistress gloomily,

in answer to her look of inquiry, 'and, I think, to look for you. They seem to be greatly alarmed at your continued absence. You seem to have quite awakened Monsieur Barbette's interest, Kathleen,' added the poor girl, smiling sadly.

"'Troth, and I think I shall do that before I've done with him!' responded the other vehemently. 'They're just two worthless scoundrels, the pair of them. Ah, mavourneen! my lily! my beauty! what a snare has been spread for you, baited with glittering gold! Into what a pit of infamy has your own father been unconsciously hurrying you, in spite of yourself!'

"'Say nothing against my father, Kathleen,' replied Marguerite calmly; 'he did all for the best. You need not remind me of my degradation; it is sufficiently present to me every instant. I am a bond-slave—sold for gold.'

"'Yes; but not to this man, my child, but to some other. Your marriage has been a mere trap—a lie. You are a slave, indeed if you once set foot

in that vessel to-morrow morning. Monsieur Dubois is a '——

"'Is a what, woman?' asked the hissing tones of the secretary, who had entered in his usual noiseless fashion, and by another door.

"'A kidnapper!' exclaimed Kathleen boldly, stepping backward to the window. 'An emissary of a wicked prince; a disgrace to the name of man! Now I know why there has not been even a pretence of regard for this dear girl, and why you—*you* and the other villain never lose sight of one another. In an infamous partnership, you purchased her of her foolish though fond father.'

"Marguerite, speechless with anguish and terror, still made a gesture of dissent.

"'There!' cried the secretary in a tone of triumph, 'madame herself, you see, denies these absurd calumnies. What dreams, what inventions are these? Fortunately, here is Monsieur Dubois himself come to reassure her. Sir, your wife's attendant has, I believe, taken leave of her senses.'

"Certainly, to look at Kathleen, as she stood, with fiery eyes and crimson cheeks, denouncing her master and his friend, this did not seem an unlikely supposition. Marguerite gazed on her with yearning indeed, but with distrust—with a sort of affectionate pity. 'If she *be* mad,' said she, 'it is no wonder; and as for me, O Heaven! I would that I could be mad also.'

"'Nay, mistress, darling mistress, do not *you* turn from me, or mad indeed I shall go. I tell you these men are kidnappers. If I say false, let them send for the master of the hotel; let us hear what he has to say to wretches who—— Stand off, accursed thief, or I shall save the hangman trouble!'

"Dubois had made a step forward as if to seize her; but she snatched up a knife from the supper-table, and he fell back before its shining point, with his lips as white as ashes.

"'It is quite impossible, madame,' stammered he, 'to pay any attention to this woman's ravings. What would the *maître d'hôtel*—a most respectable person doubtless—think of us, who come here accompanied

by such an attendant. She has been drinking at the café opposite.'

"The café opposite! How little he knew what hope he awakened by those words. They must be there by this time surely—some of them at least. She threw the sash up with one hand, still menacing Dubois with the knife in the other.

"'If you call aloud,' said the secretary, producing a small pistol from his breast-pocket, 'if you utter a sound that can be heard in the street, the moment in which you do so will be your last.'

"'And do you think that *I* fear death like this trembling coward here!' replied Kathleen scornfully. It is for him and you, for whom hell gapes, to fear; but not for me. Look forth—back, on your lives!—not from this window, but the other—do you see those men there?—ten, eleven, twelve—and there are more to come. They are there for a purpose. See how they look up this way! They know what is doing here; they have sworn to prevent it. If I do but move my hand, there will be such a riot here as

shall be heard of far and wide, and for which your master himself will have to give account. *You* (she turned on Dubois like a tiger-cat whose young are threatened)—you poltroon, would you like to be torn asunder by a mob? Approach me or my mistress, either of you, by a single step, move a limb, a finger, be otherwise than as men turned into stone, and as sure as the stars are in heaven, it shall be so!'

"She leaned out of the window, still keeping her gaze upon her foes, and with a clear and distinct utterance, exclaimed: 'We are coming down, friends—both of us, this instant. If we are not with you in two minutes, *come and fetch us;* you will know who have detained us.' Then seizing the terrified Marguerite by her cold bloodless hand, she led her swiftly from the room, and pausing only to take the bundle which she had placed on the landing, descended to the hall, and bidding the porter open the door, was in the street with her precious charge, shawled and with her bonnet on, in less time than it takes to tell it.

"'The carriage waits, madame,' said he, 'according to orders.' And at the corner of the street stood the vehicle in question, with four horses, and the postilions in their saddles.

"Charles Perling was about to rush out from among his wondering companions, but Kathleen stopped him with her warning finger. It pointed towards the window of the room he had been so lately watching, and he understood her to mean that he should remain unrecognised by his foiled employers.

"'See that we are not followed,' cried she eagerly; 'that is all that is necessary. And may God bless you for your good deed this night.'

"The two girls entered the carriage, the whips cracked in a very *feu de joie*, and away whirled the wheels over the stones. The birds had escaped out of the snare of the fowler, though their tender hearts were palpitating yet with the extremity of their danger.

"The two travellers knew nothing of the time at which the trains started northward, so they pursued the road for several stages through the night, and in

the early morning, at an intermediate station on the line, they took the train towards home—after what an experience of the world that lay beyond it!"

The President of Minim Hall here folded up the manuscript from which he had been reading—at first in a more disjointed fashion than our own method of narration; but during the latter part, just as we have given it—and looked inquiringly towards his auditor.

"It is a strange, sad story, sir," observed Frederick. "Is it true?"

"It is all true, my lad. My poor sister had some little talent for weaving what she had to tell into the narrative form; and I found this statement, which I know to be a correct one from other sources, among her papers after death. It was never intended for any other eye but her own. It seems odd enough that she should have cultivated her gift in this manner to no purpose."

"I can understand that quite easily, sir," replied the young man, thinking of an instance of the same kind

very much within his own experience. "But does not the writer say what eventually became of the Lily of Lozere?"

"She died, my lad, of a broken heart," observed the Principal sadly. "She could not bear the shame of the plot that had been laid for her, or (what is more likely) the degradation which she saw her father felt upon her account. We can easily imagine what was said by the vulgar and malicious, and how those who envied the count's apparent good fortune, enjoyed the disgraceful failure of his hopes. He must have known, too, that his own ambition and desire of self-aggrandizement had brought this evil upon his house: if he had not made such a public boast of his daughter's beauty in Paris, the wicked scheme of Monsieur Dubois would never have been concocted. His days were embittered by self-reproach as well as by wounded pride; the home at Lozere was not the old home. The Lily languished and died, nor did the faithful Kathleen long survive her."

"And was no effort made, sir, to punish that pair of

scoundrels?" exclaimed Frederick indignantly. "Was it shown that the Sultan had any complicity in the infamy?"

"I am afraid it was," returned the Principal gravely. "The count at least always affirmed that it was. The Turkish ambassador had himself spoken highly of Dubois to the proprietor of the Château Florac. Lamotte would have moved heaven and earth to gain redress—vengeance. He appealed to the king himself in the matter; but I know not what steps were taken. It was not thought politic that France and the Sublime Porte should have a quarrel at that time, I believe. At all events, the count cannot now hear the name of Louis Philippe mentioned without an execration; and he went into voluntary exile from his native country, disdaining, as he said, to live under such a truckling prince."

"I see it all now, sir," exclaimed Frederick suddenly: "Count Lamotte is Monsieur de Lernay. I remember the scowl that crossed his face when I happened, upon the first night I met him here, to speak of Louis

Philippe. I remember how you trod upon my foot when I mentioned Constantinople."

"You are right," returned the Principal quietly. "But I did not tell you this history merely to warn you of what was dangerous ground; that would be no sufficient excuse for such a breach of confidence. I told you of this disgrace that has happened to the De Lernays, in order that you may not think a daughter of that house immeasurably beyond you, and out of your reach, as you have doubtless deemed her to be. Any great alliance, to which her birth and beauty well entitle her, has been rendered impossible to Eugenie, and her father is not likely a second time to be too ambitious in his choice of a son-in-law."

The Principal rose like one who has concluded his peroration, and does not wish to mar it by more words.

"Really, sir," stammered Frederick, perceiving that some reply was expected of him, "I scarcely see how the circumstance you speak of can concern *me;* but I thank you, most unfeignedly, for the trouble you have

taken upon my account. I shall, of course, accept the secret you have confided to me as a sacred trust; it will never pass these lips, you may be sure. Nor shall I ever behold Monsieur de Lernay or his daughter, without remembering the sorrow and undeserved affront that has been put upon them, and taking care to treat them with all the more gentleness and—and —homage."

The Principal held out his hand—and not merely the two fingers of it, which were generally offered to the undergraduate world. "I have not expelled you this time," said he smiling; "but remember (here he looked towards the door, and raised his voice) that I have been obliged to give you a most severe and lengthy reprimand, and you promise me that you never again surreptitiously leave college, even to visit your good father."

Frederick Galton laid his hand upon the door-handle, but discreetly forbore to turn it until the rustling of silk, which had once more made itself audible during the last few minutes, had hurriedly died away.

"I thank you very much, sir," said he, with emotion, as he finally took leave.

"God bless you, my lad, and take you in His good keeping!" was the Principal's grave rejoinder. Then he put the faded letters reverently away into his desk, and locked it; but his features, now he was left alone, wore a look of dissatisfaction as well as sorrow. "I have done it for the best," soliloquised he; "and yet I may have been doing harm. Perhaps nature is the best guide in these matters, after all. But what a clever fellow Morrit is! 'Gentleness' and 'homage;' that was the very thing his uncle foresaw would come of this. Poor lad, poor lad!"

CHAPTER VIII.

M. DE LERNAY'S SECOND SON-IN-LAW.

THE May term at Camford being one of the pleasantest epochs of human existence to that part of our race who are undergraduates, is proportionably fleeting; yet it merges, not into sorrow or any dull routine, such as clogs us old fellows of the work-a-day world, but—into the Long Vacation: the latter period being one of quite uninterrupted enjoyment, extending over four months at the least. Ah, youth-time, why are thy blessings thus heaped together, when more sparely used, they might gladden one a whole life long! Ah, golden hours, why fled you in such flocks, so that not one remains, but all about us now are leaden-winged, and most unmusical! Only a week remained of Camford festivities, and then the sacred

place would become a waste, inhabited only by superannuated dons, and servants in their master's clothing; while the young gentlemen themselves would have "gone down," some home to the bosom of their admiring families; some, under the pleasant pretence of a reading-party, into the picturesque fastnesses of their native land; and some, abroad, to behold men and cities, and to amass private collections of pipes, of more or less originality and beauty.

There was a long discussion at Casterton, between Dr. Galton and his brother-in-law, as to what should be done with Frederick during this interval. His sudden descent upon Oldborough, vehemently reprobated by his uncle, but not inexcusable in the eyes of his father, had seriously frightened both those relatives. That the boy should spend his summer at home, within half a day's journey of the village siren, was not to be thought of. The doctor entertained a very ill opinion of foreign countries, as a lounge for youth; and the curate had a similar distrust of reading-parties, at the Lakes, or elsewhere. "Even mathe-

matical men," said he, "have been known to fall in love upon such expeditions, wherein, indeed, there is commonly little else to do. It is most important that Frederick should have plenty to occupy his mind; his idleness is Miss Perling's opportunity, you may depend upon that. Now, what do you say to his passing the Long Vacation in town?"

"In London!" exclaimed the good doctor. "What! my boy in London, and all alone? Where is he to lodge? Who is to look after him? The temptations of town, my dear Robert, are very great; and although I have done my very best to instil into his mind good resolutions, and so forth, yet"——

"Well," interrupted the curate testily, "I confess I am not afraid of the temptations. The lad has a virtuous attachment, you see (the doctor winced), and that will probably prove his safeguard; and if it doesn't, why, the attachment cannot be very strong, so that there is some comfort in either case. Moreover, I understand, from Hermann, that the De Lernays are going to town for the season. Our impressionable

Frederick is not without a *penchant* for this Miss Eugenie, it seems. If you put a mopstick into petticoats, and let it wear a becoming cap, I believe the lad would fall down and worship it."

"A Frenchwoman and a Catholic," sighed the poor doctor, without paying any attention to the curate's last remark. "How very unfortunate our dear Frederick has been in his early objects of devotion!"

"Very," returned Mr. Morrit dryly; "but he is at least improving. Miss de Lernay is a person of good birth and education; her father is a man of mark, and there is even a little money, I hear. But I contend that we are altogether wrong in looking upon either of these affairs so seriously. By the end of the Long Vacation, I trust he will have fallen in love with several other young women."

"Robert, don't talk like that," returned the doctor gravely. "God knows I never loved any one but his mother, my sweet Ellen."

The curate bowed his head, and was silent for a little. Any mention of his sister always moved him;

he had not only that reverence for her memory which Dr. Hermann entertained for the writer of those letters he preserved so carefully, but a sacred love. Ellen Morrit had been to her brother the impersonation of all that was good in women; whenever he thought or spoke contemptuously of the sex, he always made an exception of her in his own mind. She had been his home companion for years; the ornament of his bachelor cottage; the manager of his little household; his comforter in many troubles which he had confided to no other bosom.

To the doctor, she had been all this, and more, far more, although for a shorter time. So the two men kept silence, thinking each of the same fair young creature, who, though so long dead, was yet such a strong bond between them, that when they thought of her, they straightway loved one another.

"William, my dear William," said the curate, "you and Frederick are not alike at all."

"No, indeed," returned the doctor simply; "I am glad to say that is very true. He takes after her,

not me. So fair, so kind; so endeared to all about him; so tender-hearted, and, I think, so pure."

"Yes, and that is what makes his position such a dangerous one. If he were like young Meyrick—I mean, if he was more commonplace, and even somewhat vicious—we should have no such difficulties with him as these. To be the son of a genius, is, we well know, a deplorable circumstance; but to have a genius for one's own son, is very embarrassing too. To a certain extent, you must give him his head, my good friend, otherwise he will kick himself clean out of the shafts and harness."

"What is that you propose doing?" asked the doctor wearily; not, indeed, that the subject did not interest him, but because all his air-built castles of having his son by his side for life, out of reach of temptations, and the punishments that follow upon yielding to them, seemed already dissolved, and his house, as it were, made a second time desolate. "What is it you would do with my boy?"

"Well, the best course, as it appears to me, in order

to wean him from this unhappy attachment, is to let him have his own way as respects literature. Let his mind be exercised in the manner most agreeable to himself, and it will thereby be kept from love-sick longings. The ambition of a magazine-writer, it is true, is contemptible enough, but it is better than aspirations after a wheelwright's daughter. As to Frederick's being looked after in the sense you are thinking of in London, that is out of the question; but I will write to Gory—to Jonathan Johnson, I mean—by this day's post, and if there is no room for him under his own roof, he will see that he is respectably lodged. I will get him to promise that the lad shall be always welcome; I think he will do that much for me, for the sake of old times, so that there need be no excuse for Frederick's falling into loose company. Then, as for his employing himself, after the wished-for fashion, the editor of the *Porcupine* will be able to pnt him in the way of doing that. It is not a promising plan, I acknowledge, but I can hit on no better."

"Then he will not come home—to Casterton—at

all?" said the poor doctor, sighing as he thought of the weary time that had elapsed since the lad's departure, and the long lonely summer before him.

"Certainly not," returned Mr. Morrit distinctly. "My dear William, that would be madness indeed."

Upon the very last day of term, and within a week after the above conversation, Frederick Galton received the following letter:—

"MY DEAR YOUNG FRIEND,—I have been appointed your Mentor, so henceforth revere me accordingly. You are to come up to town for the 'Long,' and to be lodged in my neighbourhood—'under my eye,' as your uncle calls it. This is to make a pupil of you indeed. We will cultivate literature together upon a little oatmeal, with Percival Potts. You only associate his name at present with your rejected communications, but I hope you will be better friends on acquaintance. He is a very eminent person—for Heaven's sake, remember that, if you happen to learn it now for the first time—and really a good creature under his

cloak of conceit. How I envy you, about to exchange Arcadia for Burlington Arcadia for the first time! Give old Hermann a friendly dig in the ribs, and put dear Phemy in remembrance of me by a kiss. Be sure you bring with you a Camford cheese, some brawn, and sundry sausages—these are the productions of *Alma Mater* by which she will really live—and leave behind all your Greek and Latin. Potts keeps Horace on draught here, as it were; I tell him it is not pleasant kept *in wood;* but nothing stops him.—Your future guide, philosopher, and friend,

"J. JOHNSON."

Frederick had been already prepared for this invitation by a letter from his father, breathing the most affectionate anxiety, but without a word of complaint, or reference to his own disappointment. A tinge of sadness ran indeed through every sentence, like the water-mark in a bank-note, to eyes that scanned it carefully; but his son did not observe it. "How kind of my dear father," thought he, "to let me take my own

way in life, and to begin it so soon." And he wrote a grateful answer. But he did not know how that reply was received; how the fluttering hope in the doctor's bosom, that his boy might even yet refuse to leave him, was thereby miserably quenched, and succeeded by the heartache; and how the loving eyes henceforth grew dull, having naught to make them glad, and the grey head drooped from that day. He came to know it, as so many of us learn such things, too late—too late, when Death, the Antichrist, has touched the ear we should have soothed, with his cold hand, and said "Be deaf."

The young man was greatly elated by the prospect before him, and in the humour to be pleased with everybody. Meeting Meyrick in the street that day, whom he had not spoken with since that unfortunate supper-party at the latter's rooms, he frankly held out his hand, with a "Come, Jack, let us part friends. I am not going back to Casterton, but shall be in London all 'the Long.'"

"Why in London?" asked Meyrick with a mistrust

quite unmistakable, but for which Frederick was at a loss to account.

"Oh, because that is where Grub Street is situated, which is where I am to live in future. How is the squire, your father? Come, let us have a chat together. Which way are you walking? It is all the same to me."

Meyrick answered doggedly: "Oh, I wasn't going to walk anywhere. I was going to Monsieur de Lernay's, to bid them good-bye. I go down to-morrow. When do you go down?"

This question was asked with an interest which might have seemed complimentary but for the harsh unfriendly tone.

"I leave for town the day after to-morrow," replied Frederick; and annoyed at the way in which his advances had been received, he added rather maliciously, "and I might just as well say good-bye to the De Lernays now as later, so I'll come with you."

M. de Lernay and his daughter were both at home. Frederick had not set eyes upon Eugenie since his

interview with Dr. Hermann, and, indeed, had purposely avoided her, lest he should give any colour to the Principal's absurd suspicion. But he had thought of her a great deal. When we like a person for his or her own sake, and afterwards hear the particulars of their history, our interest is always more excited than if the information had preceded the acquaintance. How often had he wondered at what might be the cause of that melancholy which so often sat upon Miss de Lernay's brow. How he respected, nay, revered it, now! How it chastened her glorious beauty, as she sat there with her rounded arms about her harp, itself discoursing far from sorrowful music! It was a gay air, and M. de Lernay was accompanying it with snatches of some French song, and with harmonious fillips of his fingers, when the two young men entered the drawing-room.

"Pray, do not let us interrupt you," said Frederick. "It is a most charming performance."

"And only look at his fingers!" exclaimed Meyrick, with admiration more genuine than refined. He gene-

rally spoke of M. de Lernay in the third person, and regarded him, it was evident, as a sort of intellectual acrobat, ingenious, indeed, but by no means a first-rate individual, looked upon from the "gentlemanly" point of view. It would have been impossible, he rightly conjectured, for Mr. Tregarthen, or any person connected with the great families of Downshire, to demean themselves by such grimaces, airs, and motions as accompanied the talk of the voluble Frenchman. As for understanding what he said, that was beyond Mr. John Meyrick altogether. Notwithstanding this want of appreciation, M. de Lernay was habitually complaisant towards the young squire of Casterton, and upon the present occasion endeavoured, with great patience, to teach him the art of filliping the fingers to music, which, as all Jack's fingers were thumbs in the matter of clumsiness, was rather a hopeless task. In contrast to this extreme civility towards his companion, Frederick could not help remarking that the Frenchman's greeting to himself was somewhat cold and formal; perhaps what he had recently heard of

the Count Lamotte had unconsciously imparted a less cordial tone to his own voice, which had been thus promptly repaid. He soon, however, forgot the circumstance in earnest conversation with Eugenie, whose welcome had been kind as ever. "And so," said she, after a little talk, "you are going to London to become an author, we hear."

"Ay, but to forget his vulgar Dulcinea also," broke in her father laughing: "that is in the bond as well, Mr. Galton, is it not?"

If the ground had opened, and swallowed Eugenie, harp, and all before his eyes, Frederick could scarcely have been more astonished. It was at her he stared for an explanation of this unexpected rudeness, this inexplicable outrage upon the part of the polite Frenchman; but her countenance expressed as great surprise as his own—mingled, however, with sorrow, pain, and one transient flush of scornful indignation.

"Really, sir," returned Frederick after a pause, "I am quite at a loss to answer you. I do not know how much or how little of my private affairs have been

confided to you; most improperly confided in any case, but in yours, as it seems, revealed to one who has neither discretion nor good feeling."

"My dear young sir," replied M. de Lernay coolly, "I am desolated at my mistake. I imagined that Mr. Meyrick here, being your intimate friend and near neighbour when at home, must needs be in possession of all the facts respecting your little—*tendresse.*—What shall we call it?" He looked towards the young squire.

"You may call it what you like, for me," returned that gentleman doggedly; "for I don't know what you are talking about."

For an instant, M. de Lernay's eyes shot forth "Owl!" "Pig!" but his voice did not lose its sweetness, nor his lips their smile, as he continued: "I was referring to our friend's little love-affair at Casterton."

"Oh, ah, the dairymaid!" exclaimed Meyrick, laughing coarsely.

Frederick was pale with rage, his teeth ground together savagely, his fingers clutched an imaginary

throat; but a voice heard by him alone was beseeching peace. "For my sake," it was whispering—"for *my* sake, Mr. Galton, do not strike him. Spare him, spare *me*."

"I did not know her exact profession," pursued the Frenchman quietly; "but I have not the least doubt she is a most respectable young woman. Even Dr. Hermann, who is averse to the match, has not a word to say against her upon that score. It is through him that I came to know about it, for otherwise"—here he smiled most cheerfully—"I should not have supposed our young friend to have been engaged, certainly not. —My darling Eugenie, your lips are quite pale; this room is excessively hot." He opened one of the glass doors that led into the garden; the soft June air flowed in, laden with the perfume of flowers, and the music of birds; the deep voice of a neighbouring college clock was telling the three-quarters of some sunny hour; he waited for this sound to cease ere he continued: "You see, my dear Mr. Galton, that my knowledge of this little matter was arrived at in the simplest way, however indiscreet I may have been in repeating it. It

was not told me as a secret—on the contrary, the good President entreated me to do my best to dissuade you from what he considers a most imprudent marriage. But then he does not know the power and consolations of love; that is to say—I beg pardon of Madame Hermann—at least of young love; and, above all, he made the great mistake of supposing me—me, of all men—to belong to the same worldly school as himself. Now, unhappily (for I envy above all things your prudent calculating folks), I am the most impulsive creature; *Vive l'amour* has always been my motto. If a young man's tastes lead him to marry early"—here he looked with steadiness at Mr. John Meyrick—"*ma foi*, let him do it: he has my full consent. I had thought to please you, Mr. Galton, by embracing your views of this affair; but I seem to have bungled the matter. I, who used to pride myself upon my tact—I protest I feel quite humiliated."

"I do not wonder at that, Monsieur de Lernay," observed Frederick coldly. "I had come to say good-bye to you and yours; it will be a longer farewell than

I anticipated; that is all. You have inflicted protracted pain, in the fruitless endeavour to make yourself intelligible to a vulgar nature."

"He means *me*," observed Mr. John Meyrick naïvely; "but he may say what he likes: hard words break no bones; let them laugh that win." And he winked, yes, positively winked at M. de Lernay, nodding his head at the same time in the direction of that nobleman's daughter.

Eugenie, white as alabaster, was still sitting by her harp, clutching its voiceless strings. A sculptor taking her for his model might have called her *Frozen Music*. Her eyes were looking upward, and her parted lips were moving, although in silence, like a martyr praying for strength to bear her sufferings; or even (so passing fair she looked) for the pardon of her persecutors.

She had not seen young Meyrick's gesture, that was certain, and Frederick felt so far thankful. Perhaps she had not even heard his words.

"Miss de Lernay," said he, "I am deeply grieved to have been the involuntary cause of this unpleasant

and wholly unexpected scene. Your father has not succeeded, I trust, in his object of degrading me in your eyes. I do not feel that I have anything to reproach myself with, or to have earned this insult in any way." He took her hand, which was as cold and white as snow. "Good-bye, Eugenie," he murmured.

"Is it the English custom," inquired M. de Lernay carelessly, "to address young ladies who are not relatives by their christian names?"

"Very true," observed Mr. John Meyrick, and pointing a threatening finger towards his ancient playmate, he added: "come, that lady's hand is mine; so do you drop it."

"Can this be true?" asked Frederick with a look of unutterable pity.

But Eugenie's voice was frozen as the palm which still lay in his own.

"It *is* true," returned M. de Lernay with dignity; "and it seemed to me but right that you should know it."

Frederick stood for a moment astounded with these

evil tidings. Then Indignation getting the upper hand of Compassion, and joining with Contempt and Hate—ay, it might be with Jealousy herself—he exclaimed with bitterness: "I take my leave, Monsieur de Lernay, wishing you joy, sir, of this projected alliance; but it seems to me," he added, drawing close to the Frenchman's ear, and hissing out his words, "that you are not more felicitous in your second son-in-law than you were in your first."

CHAPTER IX.

CLOUDLESS.

"WHAT will it cost to print, is a reflection often occurring to literary men, public characters, and persons of benevolent intentions." And never did advertisement speak more truly. What passion in ancient times answered to the modern desire of appearing in print, I know not; but if nothing occupied its place, human nature cannot be altogether what it used to be. There are few things more touching than the first attempts of a youth to make his ideas known to his fellow-creatures through the medium of the printing-press. Mothers and others are affected almost to tears by the lispings of a little child endeavouring after articulate speech, but in reality this is a far less moving spectacle. There are a host of female relatives, and often

a devoted male or two, eager and willing to help the prattling infant, and anticipate its meaning; but the young author has every man's hand against him, and (in general) most especially those of his own household. The literary prophet has no honour among his brethren; he is not an author to his valet-de-chambre, nor to anybody else. The public, he is assured, are in no want of his lucubrations, and the editors will not give him a chance of disproving the fact. Of course, the editors are in most cases perfectly right. The world of readers (in spite of what it suffers, as it is) owes them an enormous debt of gratitude; they are our natural protectors and guardians. They are the barriers which close the flood-gates of hundreds of thousands of private mental reservoirs, and confine them within their legitimate limit—manuscript. Were these removed, an intellectual catastrophe would occur similar to the inundation at Sheffield. We are much inconvenienced, even as matters are, by a number of shallow turbid streams, which had (we humbly opine) much better be sealed up; but if all the people who clamour or cringe for

room for their effusions in this or that periodical, were admitted thereunto, the consequences would be frightful. The public—that is, the small portion of the human race who were left to be readers only—would then rise as one man, and destroy all printing-presses.

I do not speak of the publication of Books, because the publishers are a class of persons fully capable of taking care of their own interests, and will not undertake anything—no, not though the Muses should seek Paternoster Row in person to beseech them—whereat Jupiter Mudie shakes his honoured head; while, as for publishing at one's own expense, young authors are, providentially, almost always poor. Moreover, if a wishy-washy book does get published, nobody need read it; whereas, in the case of a periodical, one takes it in "for better for worse;" and having paid six months' subscription in advance perhaps, one likes to have one's money's worth out, even if the literary fare set before us be not of the best. But though editors, as I have said, are to be praised for what they do, or rather for what they decline to do, yet it is

certain that now and then they make a mistake, and the victim of their error suffers cruelly. It was of him (or her) I was thinking when I began this chapter; of the young man (or woman) of genuine talent, who believing, with justice, in himself, cannot gain a single convert to that pleasant creed. I do not insist, like certain highflying writers upon this subject, that this young soul has any sense of a particular "mission," which, somehow or other, untoward fate will not permit it to fulfil; it is sufficient to say that it yearns after something which seems, and is, unjustly denied it. The young are permitted to entertain a little vanity. One pities the fate of the beautiful princess shut up in the lonely tower with nobody to admire her loveliness; and why should we not compassionate the unknown writer, vainer than any girl of the beauty of his unaccepted thoughts? Vain as a girl, did I say? a girl is in that matter a very philosopher compared with him; a girl, too, may become an old woman without a tinge of that weakness left in her composition —I know a dozen of such honest wholesome dames

myself—whereas the true writer is always vain to the very last. It is mercifully appointed that his own good opinion of his talents shall never leave him, for otherwise, sensitive to blame, to ridicule, to hatred, as he is, his life would indeed be a wretched one.

Conceive, then, such a youth, sitting up o' nights to compose immortal verses, that no human being perhaps is destined ever to read, but which he confidently imagines will be one day welcomed by half the human race; constructing the most ingenious plots, in which no living novel-devourer will ever be entangled; elaborating essays of the most admirable moral, and in the most Addisonian English; taking more pains and trouble about these profitless matters than his father, the conveyancing barrister, or the consulting physician, ever put themselves to, ere delivering an "opinion" that brings guineas, and everything that guineas buy.

Is there not something to touch the heart about this unrequited labour, about this young toiler who is fed by hope alone? If it were possible to convince him

that nothing he writes would ever be read, he would cease perhaps from writing (prose, at all events) altogether; but this is not possible, and therefore he works on. Force, it is said, is never lost. What, then, becomes of all these literary efforts? Well, I will tell you. They will serve, although useless in their present form, to suggest better things in future days, when the brain is seasoned, and the writer has found his public. But, in the meantime, surely this is a bad case. How many precious manuscripts has he carefully written out, and folded, and addressed, and taken privately with his own hands to the nearest post-office, or, if in Town, to the fatal box with "For Contributions" on it, at the office of the journal whose columns he aspires to fill; then having dropped it in, having lost control of his own production, what a life of agony he leads! How he regrets not having added this, or excised that, or that he did not take more pains in the caligraphy, or that he ever dropped it in that box at all.

This is not a laughing matter, my smiling friend,

I do assure you. *Crede experto.* You jest at scars who never felt a wound; but if your ill luck had decreed that you should "embrace the literary profession"—to use a somewhat voluptuous metaphor for a very prosaic proceeding—you would know that there are few occasions more unpleasantly anxious than that to which I have alluded. When personal poverty, and —worse—the necessity for supporting others, are involved in the matter, you can easily perceive that the ensuing suspense would be torture; but happily this is rarely the case. Few young persons, who have to earn bread for themselves or others, are so mad as to put faith in their pens. It is quite enough to be on the tenter-hooks of expectation upon one's own account, and with respect to praise, let alone pudding; for upon the acceptance or rejection of the aforesaid manuscripts seem to hang future Fortune, Fame, and the Gratitude of one's Fellow-countrymen throughout all ages. Whether that poem addressed To a Falling Tear (suppose) shall appear in the forthcoming issue of the *Ephemeral* (price twopence), is a question fraught,

I say, with enormous apparent consequences to the youthful poet, who buys the next number upon the first moment of publication, and tears it apart with trembling fingers that will not brook the intervention of the paper-knife. How his cheeks burn, and his eyes kindle with hopeful expectation; and again, how his features pale, poor fellow, and "go out," as it were, when his disappointment becomes certain. He searches the accursed serial again and again before this takes place, clinging to the wretched chance that he may have overlooked the thing, that those lynx-like eyes of his may have passed by their desired object. Vain thought! At last, blank despair seizes upon him. What is it to him that the sun shines, or that the spring is coming upon the earth—all with him is night and winter. Desolation has marked him for her own—for four-and-twenty hours at least, after which time he begins to reflect that it was hardly likely, not possible in fact, that the Falling Tear should have been published so immediately, and looks out with as eager longing as before for the next appearance of the

Ephemeral. But if, on the other hand, the poem happens to be printed in the number in question (which we are always supposing it deserves to be), what transcendental bliss ensues! Don't talk to me (who have been married these twenty years) of the first kiss of love; that is very pleasant, no doubt, but it is a transient gratification, and you can't carry it away with you, and show it to your friends in the country. No, there is no rapture, take it altogether, for durability and cheapness, as well as many other things, like that derived from one's first appearance in print. Nothing else brings the young blood into the cheek so merrily, and sets the heart beating to such a glorious tune. See how his eyes sparkle as he reads and rereads that product of his own brain, which shall now permeate the civilized world, cross the ocean deeps, and elevate the savage. He is unaware that the circulation of the *Ephemeral* is small and mainly confined to the district of St. Mary Axe.

Heaven forbid that he should be disenchanted! Who would be so cruel as to dispel that glittering

vision? And which of us old stagers, hacks of Grub Street, to whom the sight of print has become as hateful as that of handcuffs to the confirmed pickpocket, which of us does not wish that he could once more entertain such dreams! Happy youth, star-bespangled, flower-crowned, playing out thy brief Extravaganza, far be it from me to tell thee what a crowd of vulgar people, who have all their parts to play as well as thou, and are not mere "supers," alas! are waiting at the wing to "come in" presently—critics, rivals, bailiffs, devils (Printers' and Blue). There is no man who has written for publication at all—no, not though he should have been born correspondent to the *Economist*—but has experienced something of poetic elevation consequent upon his first appearance in print. The country gentleman who puts forth his pamphlet upon the building of labourers' cottages, with a view to decoration as well as comfort, is not exempt from this feeling, when the first-proof comes home from his printer, any more than the budding poet I have in my mind, although, of course, the latter experiences it in a higher degree,

How many times, think you, had our young friend, Master Frederick Galton surreptitiously sought the cottage at Casterton, where gingerbread nuts and bull's-eyes were issued in moderate quantities, and from whence also went forth his majesty's mails? How many parcels of manuscript, and at what an expense considering that the book-post was not as yet invented, had he cast into that letter-box, as bread upon the waters, and found again (poor fellow), after many days, returned through the same channel! How he would leave his home before breakfast, and seek the windy down, in order to meet the postman, and deprive him of the private bag belonging to the doctor, that nobody should know of these literary disappointments save himself!

Even at Camford, he experienced a great thrill of joy when the *Paternoster Porcupine* came to hand, with one of his own productions among its other less interesting contents, although this was now getting to be quite a common event. At first, Mr. Jonathan Johnson had been cruelly fastidious, and Mr. Percival Potts had been

absolutely hostile, as it became a sub-editor to be towards a protégé of his principal; but presently both those gentlemen, being men of discernment, perceived that there was genius as well as freshness in the lad, and that it was to the interest of their magazine that he should be encouraged. Experience of life, of course, he had not; but he had wonderful intuition in place of it; while high spirits — inestimable gift, almost always denied to a well-seasoned writer; that virtue to which Dickens owes so much of his charm, but which poor Thackeray never possessed—illumined every page. The young man was not unaware of his own value; the simple test of comparison, applied by however partial a mind, can scarcely lead one very far wrong in these matters; he studied the writing of the well-remunerated Snooks, who was in the same line of business, and said to himself, without the slightest hesitation: "I am a far better humorist than this fellow;" and Frederick Galton was right. He perceived, in that pleasant, chatty communication just received from Mr. Jonathan Johnson, an invitation not only to London, but to Litera-

ture, so far at least as the *Paternoster Porcupine* was concerned. It would have been couched in very different terms, he knew, if he had been looked upon as an impracticable contributor, whose importunity was about to become personal instead of merely postal; for as long as a man can be kept off by a letter, there is comfort, but when he arrives within arm's-length, he becomes intolerable.

Mr. Jonathan Johnson occupied ground-floor apartments in that part of Piccadilly which looks upon the Green Park: these consisted of a gigantic dining-room, the northern portion of which was always plunged in gloom; a bedroom of similar proportions; and a study at the back of the house, out of which you might step, if you were so minded, into a small conservatory, overshadowed by two American aloes in green tubs, and ornamented by a fountain, in a female form. "We don't know who she is," stammered Mr. Jonathan Johnson, upon exhibiting these premises to our young friend, on the first evening of his arrival; "but I call her the An—an—an—an"——

"The Anonyma," suggested Galton, fresh from his classical studies.

"Nothing of the kind, sir," returned the editor, with contemptuous indignation; "I call her the Anomaly, because when she works she only plays. But she scarcely ever does play, except in winter for a few minutes, when the pipes burst after a frost. Percival Potts keeps his tobacco in her pitcher, because he says it's such a dry place; but I've got you a lodging close-by, and if ever she plays, I'll send for you. What a fortunate young dog are you, to commence a literary life in Mayfair! What a future may not be before you, who have money to start with, and kind friends at home!"

"And in London, too, I am sure, sir," observed Frederick frankly.

"That is well thought of, and happily said," mused the editor, regarding the blushing youth as though he were an inanimate study. "Speaks without a stammer, too; some people have such luck; and quite as good-looking as I was myself at the same age. Lord! how Potts will hate him."

"I am afraid that he is not very fond of me already, if I may judge by his letters," returned Frederick laughing.

"Well, you see, Percival Potts is an admirable person in many respects; but he does not like men younger than himself, and being of tolerably ripe years, that enlarges his antipathies; neither is he fond of persons that are in better circumstances, and being a poor man, why, that gives him all the more scope for prejudice. Then you must be prepared for making rather an unfavourable personal impression upon him, because he is ugly—he is sometimes called the Billiard Ball, being both "Plain" and "Spot" in one—and that circumstance of course sets him against nice-looking people. Whenever Potts quarrels with me, poor fellow, I always set it down to jealousy. But in spite of these little disadvantages, he's a most valuable man. I know of no one who can put more animosity into a review. If he had never learned Horace (out of a "crib," as I fancy), he would be more agreeable as a conversationalist; but I have delivered you from that for the present, by betting

him a guinea that he does not abstain from quoting his favourite author for a fortnight, and Potts will always do his very best for a guinea—that's a beautiful trait in him. He will probably confine himself to-morrow to his classical anecdotes. If you take my advice, you will listen to them attentively. It is our working-day at the office, so I will take you into the City after breakfast, and introduce you to my *collaborateur*. I have some writing to do before I go to bed, so, unless you will take supper, I will show you your lodgings."

Mr. Jonathan Johnson had already entertained his young friend with a nice little dinner, washed down with excellent champagne, since which they had had coffee with a *petit verre* in it, so that Mr. Frederick Galton was by no means in want of any further refreshment. His host therefore led the way to the apartments he had already engaged for him, which, for the benefit of the curious, I may as well state comprised a second floor in Bolton Row.

CHAPTER X.

A NIGHT-WALK IN LONDON.

WHAT a poem in itself, I have said, is that first appearance in print, which seems to some, perhaps, such a prosaic matter; and what a poem, also, is another ordinary circumstance which happens to even a greater number of people—namely, one's first night in London. In the daytime, the stranger is so dazed with the ceaseless crowd and monstrous hum, that he has had no time to reflect upon the wonders about him; but in the summer night (suppose), as he leans forth from his window, and hears the distant traffic that will not cease for hours yet, and looks round on the countless dwellings of his fellow-creatures, ignorant of his hopes, and fears, and ambitions, and even of his very

existence, how "the individual withers, and the world grows more and more."

If the hypothetical stranger, however, has inaugurated his arrival by going to the Cider Cellars, and making a night of it, he will doubtless not experience any emotion of this kind; or if there is the least uncertainty about procuring breakfast next morning, that circumstance will undoubtedly monopolise his mind, to the exclusion of all less practical considerations. I have no desire to claim more empire for the imagination than it is entitled to. I don't believe that Bow Bells said anything whatever to Whittington about his future appointment as Lord Mayor. They discoursed to him, more probably, concerning the food and accommodation he was likely to meet with upon the ensuing day. There is nothing more engrossing to a man with an empty stomach than the idea of getting it filled; compared with that sacred necessity, Theology, Politics, Metaphysics are of insignificant importance, even to a gentleman of genius. There is an immense deal talked and written about the superiority of mind over matter, by respecta-

ble persons who have never experienced hunger and thirst; but I have never seen philosophy and an empty stomach in company together yet. Let the dull dogs take heart. But as for this Frederick Galton, with whom everything is running smoothly at present, it is but natural (I do assure them) that he should lean out of his second-floor window, and indulge himself in a little philosophical meditation. This London, which, to a poor and friendless man, is, I suppose, the most hateful place on earth, and more solitary than sailless sea to shipwrecked mariner, is, to one who has just crossed its threshold, with a well-filled purse and ready-made friends, the most promising city out of Fairyland. It is so when mere Pleasure is beckoning with her fair round arms, but how much more when Fame stands beside her, smiling too, but far more nobly, and eager to present her wreath of bay-leaves. The golden gate stood open upon the shining road; the glory beamed upon him, not from far. A mighty music jubilant and full, which had his praise for theme, seemed to salute the trembling ear of Frederick Galton as he

hearkened for the first time to that solemn roar of London.

Then his thoughts slid back to the incidents which had so lately occurred to him. The confidence which Dr. Hermann had reposed in him, and which, under the influence of passion, he had betrayed to M. de Lernay. He pictured to himself the previous meeting which must have taken place between those two, and how the Principal, acting for the best, had made a confidant of the Frenchman with respect to his young friend's attachment to a person of humble birth, and to the supposed influence which the beautiful Eugenie exercised over him. He perceived how De Lernay's pride had been touched by this injudicious news; for, perhaps, he had really misconstrued Frederick's attentions to his daughter, and at one time had been disposed to welcome them.

There was some allowance to be made for the old nobleman, then, so far as Frederick was concerned. It was a characteristic piece of revenge that he should thus have humbled him in the presence of John

Meyrick, an eligible suitor enough, so far as money and position were concerned; but that the father of Eugenie should have given such gratuitous pain to his own daughter seemed almost incomprehensible. Was it possible that he suspected her of entertaining a secret affection for the village doctor's son, and had taken this cruel method at once of intimating his suspicions, and putting a violent end to them? Could he himself meet the De Lernays again, thought Frederick, after having exploded that bomb-shell about the second son-in-law. Was it possible that he should never more behold the kind eyes of Eugenie, or listen to her witching tones; or worse, was he to know her as the bride, the wife, of his old playmate, to whom time would only bring new vices, and harden the ingrained coarseness of his disposition? It was nothing to Frederick, so far as he was concerned, whom Eugenie married, certainly not; but it pained him to think of what her life was likely to be, mated with such a clown; and his cheeks flushed, and his nails pressed hard into his hands, as he thought of John Meyrick.

Of all the men from whom he had just parted at Camford, his Casterton companion was certainly the least attractive. There were ten, twenty, thirty honest-hearted kindly young English gentlemen, with any one of whom—Selby, Richards, Ackers, Swayne, their very names even occurred to him—he could have borne to hear that Eugenie de Lernay was betrothed—but to that unfeeling dullard! What a scoundrel was this sweet spoken, smiling Frenchman, who could sell his daughter to such a bidder! They were coming up to town, it seemed, shortly. Would it be better that he should meet her again, or not? there could be no "harm" in his doing so, of course; but would it be agreeable to herself? Somebody else, who was of infinitely more importance to him, was also coming up to town. Beautiful Mary Perling would be at a certain number in Grosvenor Square in a very few days.

It was not worth while making his good father anxious by informing him of this latter circumstance. As for Mr. Morrit, all confidence between uncle and

nephew had been put an end to by the conduct of the former. Mr. Jonathan Johnson was not the sort of man to be plagued with information of this kind—and, in short, what need was there to tell anybody? Grosvenor Square! He looked out that fashionable spot in the map of London he had purchased that afternoon; it did not seem far from his present residence, and he thought he would like to see the very house where his dear Mary was to be located. There was a latchkey lying temptingly upon his table, and the night was early yet; it had not struck ten o'clock. He pocketed the key, and putting his hat on, went down stairs; in the hall, he found his landlady, with whom he had already had an interview.

"Going to take a walk, sir, this beautiful night?" said she with fussy politeness: "You will find your candle and the matches upon the table when you come in."

"Thank you," replied Frederick. Charming old lady, delightful arrangement, thought he; nobody is inquisitive in town. What a fuss there is at Camford

about "knocking in" after midnight! What an astonishment would there be at Casterton if one started out at 9.45 P.M. for a stroll!

Among the accomplishments which Alma Mater had taught him was that of smoking cigars, and he lit one ere he left the door-step.

"A nice-spoken young gentleman," reflected the landlady, looking after him; "but I am afraid he is no better than he should be. Mr. Johnson said I wasn't to be a spy upon him—far from it; but that I was to let him know if he got into much mischief, being fresh from the country. How on earth am I to tell? He doesn't seem to be domestic, using his latchkey the very first evening. I hope he won't set the house a-fire when he comes back; perhaps I had better sit up, for fear he should have taken more than is good for him. One never knows; though he's gone the wrong way for that. All the drinking-places are in the other direction. May be he's got friends in Mayfair, though it's rather an odd time to call upon them."

The old lady wagged her head three times in a

sagacious manner, and closed the door with an "Ah!" expressing a whole volume of reprehension.

Unaware of that injurious interjection, Mr. Frederick Galton took his way up Curzon Street, just beginning to be alive with its more or less fashionable assemblies, and noisy with wheel and hoof, and so, by a circuitous process, reached the square he sought. There was nothing about the mansion in question peculiarly fitting the future abode of a Beloved Object; a couple of paroquets, in the shape of two young footmen, lounging and laughing at the open door, seemed to give token that their master and mistress had relieved them of their laborious duties that evening by going out to dinner; and grandeur and vulgarity appeared to hold divided possession of the place. How could he ever visit her there, being, as she must needs be, in the housekeeper's room! Would not these powdered apes treat him with impertinence when he asked to see her? He had read of such things in the case of governesses, and a housekeeper's assistant would be in an even less elevated position. Nay, would it not, indeed, be necessary for

him to ring the servants' bell? Heavens! It is astonishing how these little matters affect very superior minds, my friends. Mr. Frederick Galton, poet, author, gentleman, and who privately considered himself in the order of nobility which is called "nature's own," considerably above any ordinary member of the House of Peers, felt quite a cold shiver as he thought of these things; the great iron extinguishers upon either side of the portal seemed for the moment as though they were placed there to quench the torch of Love itself. The effects of a *supposed* slight upon a sensitive nature being such as I describe, what may not a real one effect! It is said that the present prime minister of this country owes the enmity of his most powerful parliamentary foe to having put upon him, long ago, some little disparagement. Foolish M.P., but far more foolish prime minister! When will people of all grades learn that cleanliness is not next to godliness, but that civility—a tenderness for the feelings of others, and especially for those of apparent inferiors—occupies the intermediate place.

To the possession of that virtue, such as it is, Frederick Galton—who, I am afraid, has fallen into sad and deserved disfavour with many folks already, and will fall into more—might lay legitimate claim. He had once lain awake half the night at Camford, tortured with the notion that he had spoken roughly to his bedmaker upon the previous day, on the occasion of her having let his fire out; and very much he astonished that lady the next morning by his sincere apologies. Perhaps the secret of Frederick's universal popularity lay more in this careful courtesy—a sort of divine politeness, unintelligible to vulgar natures—than in any other of his natural gifts; it clung to him at all times —even in very bad ones—as the odour to the rose; if he ever did himself such violence as to refuse alms to a street-beggar, it would have been in terms that would be only less acceptable than a copper. But I believe he never had the heart for such an act of Spartan virtue. At all events, when he left Grosvenor Square that evening, and, sauntering into Hyde Park, was besought by a little beggar girl for money, he gave her a shilling,

adding to the gift some expression of pity for her condition.

> Ah, it was pitiful,
> Near a whole cityful,
> Home she had none.

The Park, she said, was in summertime her nightly refuge; the dewy grass, or some hard bench, perhaps, the couch upon which she stretched her childish limbs, The night was fair, it was true, as yet, but clouds were darkening its face, and threatening rain. How frightful did it seem that this young creature should be shelterless! The cheerful home-lights were glimmering from a thousand casements within view, but there was not one that beckoned for her—a child whom it was the duty of every one to protect and cherish. Was it not, therefore, Frederick Galton's duty too? Had Christianity—the words he had read, the sermons he had heard—no practical application? Should he not one day be told: Inasmuch as he had not succoured this little one. Considerations of this kind do not, of course, seriously affect the mature philosopher, the political

economist, or the divine; but in the season of youth, there are occasions when they strike us very forcibly.

The glorious company of the angels, thought Frederick, might at that moment be anxiously watching what course this mortal would take who had been offered such an opportunity of obeying his Master's word to the very letter. "Suppose," soliloquised he, "I take this child, and give her to my landlady, she will never take her in — that's certain. The poor little creature is dirty and ragged, and thereby has the more claim, indeed, to all Christian offices; but lodging-house keepers are a prejudiced race. To ring up a respectable lady at 11.15 P.M., upon the very first night of our arrival at her residence, with the modest request, that she will, for our sake, accommodate—adopt, in point of fact—a human waif and stray like this; really," muttered Frederick apologetically, "I don't see what is to be done. Look here, my poor child," added he aloud; "if you will call to-morrow at this address, I will try to do something for you."

The large blue eyes looked at him gratefully, but

wonderingly. She knew that he meant her well, because he had given her a shilling; but the notion of anybody trying to do something for her was an inscrutable mystery. Her whole life long, comprising half a dozen years or so, passed in that (to some, so agreeable) metropolis, offered no precedent of the kind.

"My God!" cried Frederick, taking out a whole pocketful of silver, "but this is terrible. Have you no mother, father, friend?"

The child shook her little head, a mere tangle of hay-coloured hair, which would have been a "profusion of bright brown locks" under better circumstances, and was evidently about to say: "No, sir," when a thin squeaky treble interposed with: "O you wicked story, Mary Jane, to tell the gentleman you have no friends when father is on the bench under the trees there in a hague-fit, and your poor mother down with the fever."

These words proceeded from a boy about two years older than the first child, and if possible, more ragged. One brace passed diagonally across him, and secured in front by a pin instead of a button, did duty for both

jacket and waistcoat. A filthily dirty shirt, and a pair of torn and ragged trousers, comprised his entire costume; he had not even shoes and stockings, a circumstance which accounted for his having come upon Frederick and his companion unawares.

He spoke with that whine which mendicants use so much to their own confusion, under the impression that it arouses pity, and not suspicion; but the glance with which he contemplated the money that still lay in Frederick's open palm, was frightfully natural. He gazed at it hungrily, wolfishly, and with a sort of fiendish envy, as some shipwrecked starving man might gaze at a loaf in the hands of his mortal foe.

"Is he going to give you all that?" he inquired of the girl. Then shifting his quick earnest tone to the beggar-note, he added: "Heaven bless you, good gentleman."

"No," replied Frederick, returning the money to his pocket, "I am not going to give her anything at present. He says you have been telling me lies, little girl."

The child stood with downcast eyes, but without tears or change of colour. Hard words were given her every hour; she was even thankful when they fell to her lot instead of blows. The boy seized her roughly by the shoulder.

"Yes, you are a little liar, Mary Jane, as the good gentleman says. She *will* go a begging, sir, on her own hook, for all father can do; and she don't give him the money neither, and him so ill; lying on the bench yonder, with the hague."

"Do you mean to say he sleeps in the open air, with ague upon him?" asked Frederick horrified.

"Ah, yes, sir, nights and nights he does—there he lies, sir, in that little clump of trees, if you'll come and see for yourself. It's more sheltered for him among the trees."

Frederick followed, really grieved at the falsehood of the little child, and prepared to give something to the sick man. But the angels did not any longer seem to him to be interested in the spectacle. Impulsive generosity is a very delicate virtue, and easily blunted.

The whole affair, in which a few moments before his eternal welfare seemed to be concerned, now began to be a nuisance.

The girl laid her small hand upon his coat-cuff, as though she would entreat his forgiveness, and although he did not shake her off, he disengaged himself from her coldly. As he did so, he noticed her eyes, which were absolutely distended with terror.

"Stop, boy," said he, "mind that you do not say your sister told me stories; I don't want her to be punished."

"Very well, sir, Mary Jane shan't be beat. We're close to father now, sir, if you'll step out.

Frederick quickened his steps, but looking down at the girl, perceived, although it was far from light by this time, that she was making signs to him not to follow the boy. Her little mouth was rounded to a "no," although she kept silence. In an instant it struck him that her terror was upon his account, rather than her own. He stopped short. At the same instant, two men came swiftly from the trees

in front, and made straight at him. "Run, run!" cried the little girl.

Frederick Galton turned, but behind him already stood a figure which had noiselessly placed itself between him and the path of retreat. Westward the way was yet open, but one of his opponents was already running to cut him off from that direction. It was evidently intended to drive him into the clump, wherein, although it was by no means thick, there might be ropes placed to trip him up, or more robbers in hiding behind the tree-trunks.

To the west, therefore, Frederick turned, and sped away at topmost speed. Fortunately, he had no great-coat on, and he flattered himself with reason that could he once show his heels to the three scoundrels, they would not easily catch him. Not for nothing had he followed the bounding hoops untouched by hand over the windy Downs. Still, even a town-bred man may be swift for a mere rush, and the one who had undertaken the task of cutting him off had probably been chosen for that post on account of his speed.

The roof of the guard-house could be seen in the distance just rising out of the hollow, and for that Frederick shaped his course. He heard a rushing of winged feet behind him and about him; he believed that at one particular point, when he was striving his hardest, a hand was stretched forth to seize him, and did just graze the skirt of his garment; but he was aware of nothing for certain until he came at racing speed and head foremost, against some soft substance advancing in the opposite direction, from which he rebounded, and then spun round in spite of himself like a billiard-ball which has got the screw on. This obstacle was a strange gentleman's waistcoat.

Not in the least doubting that he had fallen in with another robber—to which profession he was prepared by this time to set down most Londoners who took the air at night—Frederick began, with what little breath was still left in him, to vociferate "Police! police!" notwithstanding that the stranger wore as respectable an appearance as a silk umbrella and double eye-glasses can give a man. These latter, when

fixed over the nose by a spring, generally impart to the wearer some likeness to a water-beetle; but in the present case the similarity was perfect. No other insect could have expressed such vacuous astonishment. It was nearly a minute before self-complacency was restored to the stout stranger, and pomposity reassumed her throne.

"Police, indeed!" ejaculated he. "Upon my word, young man, I envy your audacity. You commit a murderous assault upon an unoffending citizen, and then call upon the law to sanction your crime."

"Sir," replied Frederick, "I am deeply grieved; but the fact is, I was pursued by robbers—footpads."

"Pursued by camel-leopards," retorted the stranger contemptuously; "there is no such thing as a footpad in existence; the Enclosure Act has done away with them and their haunts together. It was your conscience that pricked you to that speed, young man. The wicked fleeth when no man pursueth."

"There were three men," persisted Frederick. "I saw them all as plain as I see you."

"An optical illusion," returned the stranger confidently.

"If a little girl had not cried 'Run!' I should have been robbed, and perhaps murdered by this time."

"There is nothing more easily deceived than the hearing," persisted the stout gentleman, "and especially if we are suffering from self-reproach. Bessus, the Pæonian who had secretly committed parricide, was harassed in precisely the same manner. Being at dinner on one occasion, he arose up hastily, and with his spear began to break a nest of swallows that was made upon the outside of his house, and to kill the young. 'Why are you so angry that the swallows twitter?' asked the guests. 'Twitter!' said he. 'Oh, you call it twittering, when you hear them thus falsely accusing me of having slain my father.'"

"But I have really not committed parricide," urged Frederick, smiling at the strange humour of his new acquaintance.

"That is nothing to boast of," returned the other austerely: "and besides, I dare say you have done

worse things. Fathers are sometimes very annoying.—And now, will you please tell me the whole story, with the *dénouement* of which I am only too well acquainted."

Then Frederick explained, that being a young gentleman from the country, he had come out for his first walk in town that evening, and had met with the adventure which had been already described. "The little girl," insisted he, "had, I am sure, nothing whatever to do with it. She never intended, I am certain, to entrap me in the snare which the boy led me into. I never saw a more genuine object of charity."

"Charity—and very often the object of it—covers a multitude of sins," observed the philosopher demurely.

"Not in this case, however," returned Frederick warmly: "I owe my safety to that little child, I know. I am so afraid they will take some cruel vengeance on her, for having striven to warn me of my danger."

"They will give her a smack or two, doubtless," observed the stranger; "but that is all. The desire of revenge for its own sake is dying away, along with the

other heroic virtues. There was something glorious in those old revenges. That *calix vitæ, calix mortis* of the Earl of Luxemburg, when he was poisoned by the monk in the eucharist, haunts one's memory like the refrain of some ballad."

"I wish I could meet with a policeman," exclaimed Frederick impatiently.

"Then, again, there was that other Italian," pursued the stranger with enthusiasm, "who, having his enemy in his power, told him that there was no possible way to save his life, unless he would immediately deny and renounce his faith; which the poor wretch having done, in hope of mercy, his enemy stabbed him to the heart, killing, as he believed, his body and soul in the same moment. Again, Olearius tells us"——

"My dear sir," interrupted Frederick vehemently, "would you mind coming back with me, since I cannot see either park-keeper or policeman?"

"I should mind it very much, young gentleman. Have you not had enough of adventure for one night?

Quàm pœnè furvæ regna Proserpinæ
Et judicantem vidimus Æacum.

Be content with your whole skin. Either your three friends and the two interesting children are still in the clump of trees you speak of, or they art not—and, as I believe, never were. In the one case, it would be madness to retrace your steps; in the other, folly. If you have given the little girl your address, and she is the innocent being you imagine her to be, she will doubtless call at your lodgings to-morrow; otherwise, she will avoid them as she would a police-office. My way lies southward, and I recommend you to accompany me till we get out of the Park: it is only just, since you have delayed me beyond gate-shutting, that you should help me over the railings. Popilius would have almost done as much for Cicero."

"Sir," said Frederick, "I am in your hands. You doubtless know what ought to be done better than I. But how disgraceful is it that Hyde Park should not be safe to walk in! I shall certainly write to the *Times*."

"You had much better write to the *Unicorn*, which is always upon the side of order," returned the stranger

loftily—"*cujus pars magna sum,* of which it is only right to say, that I am assistant editor. It is the duties of that responsible office which have kept me out so late, otherwise, I love early hours—'small and early,' as the phrase goes—as Licinius Crassus loved his lamprey. Yonder are the railings between us and the Knightsbridge Road; we must take a bee-line for that big elm tree, and we shall find that three of the sharp iron-heads have been removed thereabouts—I believe by the licentious soldiery—for convenience of ingress and egress."

"You have been belated, then, once or twice before," observed Frederick slily.

"Just so," said the stranger, "mostly through giving benevolent assistance to persons in peril. Besides, do you contend that there is anything seriously wrong in climbing over a fence, you, a young reprobate, with a latchkey? You remind me of Pope Adrian IV. who, having swallowed as many camels as most theologians, was choked by a fly in a glass of water. Come, give me a leg up."

"With all my heart," replied Frederick, assisting his stout companion in the manner requested; "but there is somebody abusing us already for getting out this way."

"Give him railing for railing," ejaculated the stranger; "he is some miserable official appointed by a Whig ministry. Thank you, my lad; my lodgings are close by. *Vile potabis modicis Sabinum cantharis;* if a glass of toddy has charms for you, I shall be happy to offer it."

"I am very much obliged to you," replied Frederick frankly; "but I am somewhat too tired to appreciate your good company this evening. I should much like to know, however, to whom I am indebted for the kind invitation."

"My name, sir, will probably not be unknown to you," observed the stout gentleman, waving his hand with dignity. "*Exegi monumentum.* As a political writer, who has been mentioned for more than one borough during the present sitting of parliament—as a *littérateur* of some little eminence—as a social com-

panion of unexceptionable lineage, whom most persons are glad to welcome to the friendly board—in one of these three characters, I say, it is probable that you must already be acquainted with the name of Percival Potts."

CHAPTER XI.

EDITORIAL.

THE office of the *Paternoster Porcupine* was, of course, in Paternoster Row, a locality fortunately better known than frequented by the inhabitants of the metropolis. If the nine Muses, as we have hypothetically imagined, should really ever visit that locality in person, they would entirely block it up as a thoroughfare, even though they should leave their crinolines in Ivy Lane. The haunters of this home of literature are characteristically spare and thin, and an author may pass an author upon its foot-pavement; but "gin a body (of decent size) meet a body" (of decent size)—if a publisher meet a publisher, for instance—one of them must either lie down, and let the other walk over him, as the goats are said to do in similar circumstances, or

step into the roadway, and run the risk of being flattened out by a van full of tracts or encyclopædias. Gin a van meet a van, I do not know what eventually happens, although I have often seen the beginning of the embarrassment.

From this dark and confined spot, however, issue Light and Freedom enough, as sparkling wine flows forth from the neck of a black bottle. The *Porcupine* had its office pleasantly situated in the very narrowest part of this so-called thoroughfare, and when it shot forth its periodical quills on the last day of every month, may have been said to be unapproachable by the general public. If you went in the wholesale way for "Pines," to which the trade irreverently abbreviated the title of that serial, you might have been listened to; but the author of the "Falling Tear" in search of a single number of the publication, would have been trampled under foot by newsboys. Upon the morning of Frederick's first visit, however, all was peace with the *Porcupine*. A little boy stabbing at flies on the counter with a penknife, was the sole occupant of the shop; and he

did not desist from that exciting pastime even at the entrance of Mr. Jonathan Johnson with his young friend.

Passing by this shocking illustration of the truth, that familiarity breeds contempt, without remark, the august editor led the way up a tortuous staircase into the *sanctum sanctorum*, where sat the *collaborateur* of the *Porcupine*, the assistant-editor of the *Unicorn*, the gentleman who had been spoken of for so many boroughs—the Writer, the Politician, the Conversationalist so justly esteemed, or, in one word—Potts. Frederick had, of course, acquainted Mr. Johnson with the fact of his having met with this gentleman the preceding night, and there was now no need of an introduction. Still, Mr. Potts rose up at their entrance, and made a little speech, in which he compared the present occasion with the introduction of Pope to the great Dryden, and was pleased to pass a few compliments upon the young gentleman from Camford, sandwiched with exactly double the number upon himself.

"We have several articles in your handwriting, Mr.

Galton, in yonder cupboard, which is the blessed home of the 'Accepted.' In the last paper, I think I recognise a touch or two of my own; never mind, my friend; I am not angry: they will bear transplanting, I flatter myself: only do not imagine that you deceive me. You have not read my pamphlet, '*A Lance broken with the Times*,' for nothing."

"Really, sir," said Frederick colouring, "I was not aware"——

"I have not the least doubt of it," interrupted Percival Potts, surveying his supposed plagiarist with the blandest air: "no person of your age is at all aware of what is really his own, and what is the property of other people."

"The law takes a very different view of the case," remarked Frederick coolly.

"I am speaking of ideas, sir," returned the novelist savagely. "Here are fifty manuscripts upon this table, every one of which is going to be 'Declined with thanks;' many of them contain very admirable sentiments, which the writers would blush to hear, are all

stolen from the great classical writers of old. Pindar sir—the poet Pindar supplies the raw material for three-fourths of your nineteenth-century scribblers."

"Does he, indeed, sir?" observed Frederick cheerfully. "Then I am glad I never read him."

"You have read others, however, who *have* read him," remarked Mr. Potts severely; "and an idea is not rendered original by being stolen twice over."

"I think you are rather hard upon our young coadjutor," observed Mr. Jonathan Johnson, perceiving that Frederick's *amour propre* was wounded, and that he was about to say something rude. "Have you sent back Tompkins's paper?"

"There is his horrid scrawl, sir," returned the collaborateur, "which I confess I did not give myself the trouble to wade deeply into."

"Why, you have scarcely opened it," remonstrated the editor-in-chief, taking up a roll.

"O yes, I have," replied Mr. Potts. "The beggar had fastened the pages together with some sticky substance, on purpose, I suppose, to see if I did pay his

article any attention; and I went through the whole thing most conscientiously—with a paper-knife."

"Do you mean to say you never read it?" ejaculated Frederick Galton aghast.

"I read quite enough of it, my young friend; a little of Tompkins goes a great way. I seldom read your own admirable productions to the very end, while in manuscript; first, because your handwriting is infamous, and resembles the dying autograph of a spider escaped from the ink-pot; and, secondly, because I wish to reserve for myself what I know will be a treat in print. Ahem."

"And how much does Mr. Johnson read?" asked Frederick.

"Well, you see," replied the head of the literary staff, "Potts here does all the wow—wow—wow"——

"All the work," explained Mr. Potts; "and Johnson here gets all the salary."

"All the wow—wow—winnowing," continued Mr. Jonathan Johnson, without taking the least notice of the interruption. "Potts is good at rough whole-

sale work of that kind. He has a blessed gift of forgetting to-morrow all the rubbish that he reads to-day; I wish it had been so from his youth up, and particularly during that period when he devoted himself to the study of Horace. Now, I can't forget what I read so easily. Potts is the intellectual buffer, as it were, who intervenes between myself and the great mass of would-be contributors. My brain could not stand the shocks to which he is exposed so continuously. My mental organization is more delicate, and fer—fer"——

"Feebler," suggested Mr. Percival Potts.

"And fer—fer—finer," continued the editor-in-chief. "It was I, my dear Galton, who laid my finger upon your first production, and observed: 'Mark my words, Potts; this young person is a man of genius.'"

"Now, see how a plain tale shall put this man down," observed Potts with gravity. "When my principal here returned from the country after Christmas: 'There will be something foolish come to the office one day,' said he, 'with the Casterton post-mark. You

must make room for it, my dear fellow, in the *Porcupine,* and put it in as presentable a shape as you can.' I remonstrated, of course, at such favouritism; but Mr. Johnson only remarked: 'I know it's wrong; the writer has but few ideas of his own, being but a lad, and it will doubtless be an illegitimate production; but then it will be only a very little one. I told him to make it short.'"

"He did," corroborated Frederick laughing.

"'But his uncle is a very old college friend of mine; he quotes from the classics beautifully, and reminds me of you, my dear Potts. And he gave me two bottles of twenty port.'—'Mr. Johnson,' said I, 'you are the editor-in-chief, and I must do your bidding; but let me tell you a short story. Carolastad had been made a Doctor of Divinity eight years before he ever read the Bible; and afterwards conferring the same degree on another person equally unfitted for the position, he made this speech: 'Here I stand, and do promote this man; and I know I do not rightly therein, but, on the contrary, commit a mortal sin. But I do it

for the gain of two guilders which I get by him.' I pointed out that Mr. Jonathan Johnson was Carolastad the second. And under that protest you became an accepted contributor."

"And are all these rejected papers?" sighed Frederick, pointing to the piled-up heap upon the table. "What disappointment, and pain, and humiliation, are they about to inflict! I wonder you sleep o' nights, Mr. Potts."

"He does not," remarked Mr. Jonathan Johnson; "for he never goes to bed until the small hours. But as for feelings, he has none. See! he has written 'With thanks' outside that scented manuscript of the young lady of title; and on the literary production of the poor governess yonder, composed on blue-lined and coarse paper, torn, perhaps, out of her washing-book, with the same unswerving fingers."

"The clerk copies all that out downstairs," observed Mr. Potts apologetically; "otherwise, I should have thrown a great deal of sentiment into the formation of the letters. I confess, however, nothing moves me so much as when a rejected contributor has omitted to

enclose postage-stamps for the transmission of his article. Why the deuce can't he read the notice printed in every number of the *Porcupine?* Our proprietors don't want his stamps, of course, but where am *I* to get the Queen's heads from to frank my private correspondence, unless the regulation is observed? This stamp-sending is curious and characteristic. English contributors usually enclose them without remark, and as a matter of course—I am speaking of volunteer communications from persons who are unknown to us—Scotch contributors enclose them, and draw our attention very particularly to the fact that they have gone to that expense; Irish contributors never think of enclosing them."

"But you send back their papers, too, I trust, all the same," observed Frederick.

"We would do so most certainly, and especially because natives of Hibernia are generally very solicitous to have them back again; but not one in ten remembers to favour us with his address. Half-a-dozen letters will follow one another, demanding to know the

fate of the original document, but all of them composed in such a passion that the writers still omit to supply those few lines without which we are totally unable to comply with their requests."

"You must almost regret that there is such a thing as a volunteer contributor, since he causes you so much trouble," remarked Frederick.

"Well, no," returned the sub-editor, musing. "There are situations, of course, such as when a poetess of five-and-forty insists upon having a personal interview, and reading her horrid verses; or when a personal friend, whose talents do not lie in the literary direction, requests to appear in print, which makes one wish that the *Porcupine* were fed by machinery, or, which is almost the same thing, by a regular literary staff. But magazines which have a standing army of that kind, and do not admit volunteers, invariably get *cliquey* and narrow. Even if only one out of fifty applicants is found strong enough for the place, it is in my opinion quite worth the trouble of winnowing all this chaff."

"Besides which," observed Frederick, "it cannot but be a grateful task to hold out the hand to struggling talent, to quicken a weary heart with a few strokes of the pen, and to make light with a kindly hint or two the doubtful way."

"Exactly," remarked the editor drily; "only you must be deuced careful about your hints. And when a gentleman, and still worse, a lady, particularly begs that 'the faults of the accompanying manuscript may be pointed out' for future guidance—then let the too obliging editor beware. The authoress of 'The Bridal Gift,' in seventeen stanzas, is not to be told that 'accept' is not a perfect rhyme to 'reject,' with impunity. I have had such rejoinders out of pink tinted envelopes, and in altogether angelic handwriting, as might have had Billingsgate for their post-mark instead of Belgravia. *Desinat in piscem mulier formosa superne.*"

"You owe me a gug—gug—guinea, Potts," exclaimed Mr. Jonathan Johnson eagerly. "I never admired Horace from your tongue so much before. And I

must say, it serves you right for abusing our lady volunteers. Remember, for instance, that dear Miss Hermann, now departed; were ever patience, and genius, and good sense found united together more charmingly in any human being?"

"I have nothing to say against Miss Hermann," observed the sub-editor loftily; "but I flatter myself I have long been proof against the blandishments of females of the quill. Time was when I looked with a favouring eye upon that slanting handwriting of theirs; but now,

Non sum qualis eram bonæ sub regno Cynaræ."

"Don't believe one word of this, Galton," quoth Mr. Jonathan Johnson; "this is the merest hypocrisy, let me tell you. Potts is the idol of the fair. He is perpetually being crowned with roses by nymphs in spectacles, and with blue stockings. If they survive the effect of his personal charms and literary reputation, they succumb to his ancient lineage."

"Do not sneer, sir, at an advantage which you would know well enough how to appreciate if you possessed

it yourself," returned the sub-editor angrily. "Good blood, sir," (it is impossible to say how like Dr. Johnson Mr. Percival Potts became as he spoke these words), "is not a thing to be spoken lightly of—the blue blood of the British aristocracy."

"A pretty colour," remarked the editor-in-chief with gravity. "Why don't they take sarsaparilla?"

"You are a vulgar fellow, sir," exclaimed the other hotly; "I decline to argue with you altogether. You know that my family is as good as any in England. If you go to the Herald's Office and inquire for Potts"——

"He used to write for the *Morning Herald*," observed Mr. Johnson explanatorily; "that's what he means."

"I say, sir, you will find there is no name more associated with our historical greatness than that which I have the honour to bear." Mr. Potts had risen with his subject. He had his back to the fireplace, although there was no fire; a coat-tail was under one arm, and the other was extended as though calling the past to witness to the achievements of his ancestors. "There has never," he continued, "been any great deed effected,

whether in the Senate, or in the Forum, or upon the Battle-field, but it will be found on investigation that a Potts has been always at the bottom of it."

"And never at the top of it," ejaculated Frederick with an incontrollable impulse.

Mr. Percival Potts cast a glare through his spectacles, such as, if they had happened to have been burning-glasses, would have withered his young contributor where he stood; then preserving a tremendous silence he dropped his coat-tail, took up his hat, and walked straight out of the room.

"I kuk—kuk—kuk—congratulate you, my young friend," observed Mr. Jonathan Johnson ruefully. "You have made an indifferent joke and a determined enemy for life. Why, even I, who have known him these twenty years, *I* scarcely venture to break a lance with Percival Potts over the barrier of his ancestral greatness."

"My dear Mr. Johnson," observed Frederick frankly, "I am sorry to have offended any friend of yours; but the fact is, I cannot stand a gentleman of that sort.

Who cares about his confounded family? What a subject, too, for a human being to be tedious upon! Surely, of all bores, a hog in armour is the most unbearable."

"Master Frederick Galton, Master Frederick Galton," returned the editor, shaking his scanty locks, "it is less dangerous to have a talent for mimicry, ay, or even for drawing caricatures, than for making an epigram like that. Percival Potts is a man who is not accustomed to hear the simple truth, and far less the truth with a sting to it. He is the king of a little territory, the inhabitants of which pay him abject homage."

"Dangerous amongst eggs with a stick, as we say in Downshire," remarked Frederick laughing.

"And not only then," continued Mr. Johnson gravely. "He has no little social influence, although it may be he is less loved than feared; while he is really of considerable political mark; and if ever the *Unicorn's* man, Lord Cuckoo, comes into office, depend upon it we shall hear of Potts. They say Lord Peewit is getting very shaky."

"I knew nothing of all this, you see," observed Frederick impatiently. "Why don't he wear a placard, or the Cuckoo livery? and I am afraid I should not have held my tongue even then."

And his apprehension was well grounded. For there are two sorts of independent spirits in the world, who are never known to mix kindly. The one to which Mr. Percival Potts belonged believe that all the world belongs *to them;* while the other, comprising Mr. Frederick Galton, never concern themselves with the question, and do not care three-farthings whom it belongs to.

CHAPTER XII.

RECREANT.

How very few things come to pass, however capable (as it seems) of being foreseen, exactly as we poor mortals have anticipated! There are such things as presentiments, it is true, but we hear nothing of the strong convictions often entertained beforehand, which the event proves to be groundless. A man of an unhopeful disposition, who is always speculating for the fall, must occasionally meet with the misfortune he so earnestly expects, but even that not seldom comes upon him in a manner as unexpected as success itself.

Thus, upon an afternoon at the end of June, when Mr. Frederick Galton made his call at a certain house in Grosvenor Square, apprehensive, as we have seen, of meeting there with a number of social indignities,

things did not turn out precisely according to his mental programme. He experienced that hesitation which we have already mentioned as having taken possession of his mind, as to whether he should ring the "'Visitors'" or the "Servants'" bell, up to the instant that he stood under the portico of the mansion, when he discovered, to his great relief, that there was but one bell and a knocker.

Of course, he could have gone to the area gate, and rung *that* bell; but there was an individual with a basket under his arm, and wearing a white apron, already there, in whose company it seemed somehow that it would be incongruous for him to gain admittance. So he rang the visitors' bell, and, as a brass-plate upon the door said "Knock and Ring," he knocked, but with a hesitating and indecisive hand, as a postman might have done who had been invited to a fashionable dinner-party.

It was evident, from the time that elapsed before the door was opened, that this hesitation had not been lost upon the folks below stairs. Mr. Galton was upon the

point of knocking again, and this time rather savagely (for he did not like to be kept waiting any more than did Louis Quatorze), when the door was opened, but not to its full width, by one of the canary-suited footmen with a powdered head. Upon catching sight of the visitor, however, this gorgeous but not altogether unintelligent creature threw the door back with a jerk, and remained in the attitude of "attention," upon one side of it, like a pillar of very florid architecture. Frederick stepped into the hall, and the door closed behind him. The house was a very nice house in every respect, but he had rather it had been much less magnificent, with Mary Perling in the drawing-room instead of the housekeeper's room.

"Here is my card," said Frederick blushing; "I wish to see Miss Perling."

"Miss who, sir?" inquired the footman, placing his head on one side like an inquisitive cockatoo. "I beg your pardon, but I did not catch the name."

"Miss Perling," repeated Frederick, between his teeth, and looking nervously towards the staircase, lest

any member of the family might be an involuntary witness to his humiliation.

"Young ooman, a friend of the housekeeper, eh?" inquired the servant, his whole manner changing from obsequiousness to vulgar familiarity. "All right, young man; step down this way, if you please."

Frederick followed this insufferable menial, speechless with rage, and was passing a door on the right hand, when it opened suddenly, and some one cried: "Galton! What, it *is* you? Well, I thought I could not mistake that voice of yours. So you have found me out at last, have you? I am sure I am very glad. Let me have the pleasure of introducing you to my mother: Mr. Frederick Galton, Lady Ackers. We have not done luncheon yet, you see; pray, sit down and join us." Thus spoke Sir Geoffrey Ackers, a college acquaintance of Frederick's, who had begged him (he now recollected for the first time), to "look him up," if ever he came to town.

The canary-coated footman retired aghast at this reception of the "young man;" a butler, more gentle-

manlike-looking than most members of the House of Peers, and whose deportment was equal to that of a bishop in full canonicals, placed a chair for him, and handed some chicken salad. "I have heard a great deal of you, Mr. Galton, from my son," observed the hostess graciously; "and I am very pleased to see you. If you had but called yesterday instead of to-day, you would have met with old friends. Monsieur de Lernay and his daughter were with us."

"He would certainly have come, if he had known *that*," observed Sir Geoffrey roguishly; "but for my part, I am glad he did not. One can never get Miss Eugenie to listen to a word one has to say, when Galton is in her company. He monopolizes that beautiful creature altogether."

"Then I am afraid it was some hint of her being intimate here, that has procured us the favour of Mr. Galton's presence," remarked her ladyship smiling. "Monsieur de Lernay was a very old friend of my poor husband, years and years ago. Ah! I remember him, one of the handsomest and most agreeable men of

the French court. He is sadly broken, however, now: I should scarcely have known him."

"Indeed!" said Frederick, who, by a great mental effort, had thrust from him all reflection upon the consequences that might flow from his present course of conduct, and was determined to play out the scene, in which he found himself an involuntary actor, as creditably as he could. "Yet he seems to bear his years uncommonly well; while for wit and liveliness I have never seen his equal."

"True, his conversation is coruscating as ever," pursued Lady Ackers; "but the effort is perceptible. You see the wheel of the machine behind the electric sparks."

"Yes; I have observed that," said Sir Geoffrey, "though only quite lately; indeed, since they came to London. I think he is annoyed about the affair between his daughter and Meyrick. They say that is a settled thing. How came you to let that come to pass, my fascinating friend, eh? I thought she was to have been Mrs. Galton."

"Fie, for shame, Geoffrey," said Lady Ackers gravely; "you must not talk so lightly of the disposal of a young lady's hand. Whoever marries Eugenie de Lernay, will be a fortunate man, in my opinion. Her behaviour to her father is devotion itself; and yet, I suspect, he is not altogether so charming at home as he is abroad. It is said that our sex are adepts at dissimulation, and have two faces—one for the world, and one for the domestic hearth; but Janus was a male after all."

"My dear mother," said Sir Geoffrey, "I had no idea you were so classical. It must be the presence of Galton which inspires you; he is not only a great classic—who has never been known to use a crib—but also an author on his own account."

"Then I hope he is not one of those who seem to do their best to bring our sex into disrepute. One would think, to read most modern books, that it is women alone who deceive, and truckle, and are dishonest; but that men are always straightforward, honourable, and incapable of baseness and dissimulation."

"My dear mother, Galton will strangle himself in the attempt not to laugh at your enthusiasm. He is already scarlet, and will presently fall a victim to courtesy and chicken salad."

Frederick Galton's face was scarlet indeed, but not with suppressed laughter: Lady Acker's random shaft had struck home. What a base, truckling hypocrite was he himself—he who was so accustomed to regard the weaknesses of others with supercilious disdain. Why had not he had the moral courage, nay, the common candour, to say at once, before he had crossed that dining-room threshold: "Sir Geoffry Ackers, I did not call here to renew my acquaintance with yourself, for I did not even know you lived here. I remember now that I had heard this house belonged to a family of your name, but the coincidence never struck me. I came to see Mary Perling, a respectable young woman of humble birth, who is, I believe, the guest of your housekeeper."

Would it not be better even to confess it now, and exchange the apartment of which he was a tenant,

under false pretences, for the housekeeper's room? It would undoubtedly have been very much better, but it would also have been excessively embarrassing. Do not suppose that Frederick Galton did not know what was the proper course to be pursued as perfectly well as I, or you, my most philosophic of readers, could tell him; it is my opinion that he even knew it better. In spite of that hackneyed quotation, γνωθι σεαυτον, our fellow-creatures are commonly quite as wide-awake to their own weaknesses as they are to their own interests. Of course, it is but natural they should conceal the possession of such knowledge. The peripatetic proprietors of flowers, though compelled to advertise them as "all a-living and a-growing," are nevertheless at least as cognizant as the very sharpest of their expected patrons of the fact that the said blossoms have only stalks; and that heath, and tulip, and geranium have been but stuck in the mould to sell to the unwary. Who should be better acquainted than themselves with the unhappy truth? They may palliate by arguments of their own their

dishonesty in offering such wares for sale; but nobody —no, not Linnæus himself—could be so well persuaded as they of their rootless condition.

Almost all scoundrels are secretly convinced that they *are* scoundrels; they don't want anybody—I mean in the way of information—to tell them *that;* only they defend their own conduct to themselves under plea of "extenuating circumstances," of which the world does not take account; they return a verdict of "Guilty," as honestly as any twelve men that could be got together, only they recommend themselves (very strongly indeed) to mercy, which a Jury would omit to do. Thus, Mr. Frederick Galton reproached himself more bitterly, I fancy, than we should reproach him (despicable as he well may seem to us) with his social cowardice; with his falsehood to his friend, with his unchivalric—nay, shameful—conduct to his betrothed bride. Was this, he doubtless asked himself, what a gentleman, nay, what a *man* should do? Ah, recreant knight, whose gilded spurs deserve to be hacked off by the common hangman, shall not I, thy biographer,

straightway wash my hands of thee, and decline to describe thy fortunes further? Well, no. Mr. Frederick Galton is not a hero; I never made any pretence of his being such a monstrosity; but he is a young English gentleman, fettered, like his class, by social prejudices, but amiable, affectionate, gentle, talented, agreeable, fit to be passionately adored by any lady in the land. I will stick by him, though, I fear, he will be environed with much evil report; and I shall hold to the last to the belief that he is altogether a superior person, in spite of more weaknesses, and faults, and crimes falling to his lot than happily fall to the lot of most of us more commonplace persons.

When Lady Ackers rose from the table, and Sir Geoffrey observed: "I shall not let my mother inveigle you into her drawing-room, Galton; you must come out with me for a stroll; let us smoke a cigar in the Park," then surely was an opportunity offered for an explanation. While the two young men were alone together in the so-called "study" at the back of the

house, selecting choice specimens of the fragrant weed, from an enormous stock laid out in drawers, like some scientific collection, what could have been easier for Frederick Galton than to have made his little confession, hitherto unavoidably postponed (as he might have remarked) by reason of the presence of Lady Ackers? Above all, when they were smoking, that period especially suitable for friendly confidences, and even for saying things that cannot be very conveniently said at other times—when they were lounging on that bench in the Park with their cigars, I say, Mr. Frederick might surely have made a clean breast of it; and perhaps he would have done so, but for a circumstance which had previously occurred. Just as they left the house, Sir Geoffrey, staring straight before him, in the most unconcerned manner in the world, had made the following observation to his companion: "If you look to the left through our area railings, you will see at the last window next the steps the most beautiful face that you ever beheld in your life, my impressionable young friend, not even excepting that

of Mademoiselle Eugenie de Lernay. Don't misbehave yourself, pray, by expressing your admiration. She's a most respectable girl, I understand, a niece or other relative of our housekeeper. But is she not lovely? I protest it makes one quite regret that one is not in a position of life to offer her one's hand and heart. I suppose the butler will marry her eventually—although he's old enough to be her father—and then they will keep a public-house together. Then he will die, and leave her a buxom widow, with the good-will of the business, and she will marry her first love—some dissipated commercial traveller, perhaps—who will take to drink, and beat her. Life has no romance for those sort of people. You saw her, did you not?"

Yes, he had seen her. She was sitting close to the window, to get as much light as possible for some needlework she was engaged upon. The summer sun had never streamed down upon a face more fair—a happy, contented, trusting, faithful face, whose downcast eyes, unconscious of his presence, shot

shame into the young man's soul. He despised, he loathed himself in that he had played so mean a part even for a single hour. But it was too late now.

"You saw her, did you not?" repeated Sir Geoffrey.

"O yes," replied Mr. Frederick Galton carelessly; "decidedly pretty, *but* (it was odd how vulgar he grew in his hypocrisy) *not quite my style.*"

As he had started upon so false a tack, and sailed so far, he thought that it was best to persevere. What did it matter that these mere acquaintances, this Sir Geoffrey and his mother, were not let into his secret? They would know all in time, like other folks. It was once observed to me by a great judge of human nature, that when a man, no matter how sagacious, has made up his mind to commit a crime, from that moment his sagacity deserts him; he omits the most obvious precautions to secure his safety; he overlooks the most plain and damning evidences against him; and thus Mr. Frederick Galton, when he had suddenly decided at the threshold of that dining-room to tacitly ignore

his betrothed bride, had forgotten that the instant before, when he gave his card to the canary-coated footman, he had stated and repeated: "I wish to see Miss Perling."

CHAPTER XIII.

THE BOHEMIANS.

WHO has not experienced, after a change however short in his mode of life, the gradual erasure and fading away of his former state of existence, until the present seems the only genuine and real one? The young undergraduate, after a year or two of college life, recalls with difficulty his school-boy days, although they lasted for a decade; the Benedict of a few months can scarcely imagine that he was ever a bachelor; and the widower, alas! in a very little time, gets accustomed to his lonely home, or fills the vacant place with another bride. Time does not make blank the pages of the Past, but writes, as on a Palimpsest, upon their fading records the story of the Present.

After a few short months, it seemed to Frederick

Galton that London had been his home for years ; nor could he possibly have reproduced in writing the first impressions which the place and people had made upon his mind, although literature had become already his ordinary profession, with little that was strange or captivating about it. His ambitions, if narrowed, had become more definite; his hopes, if they had lost some of their splendour, were in some slight degree realized; his fears no longer existed. Of his future success as a writer for the periodicals, there was no doubt. He was successful—in a very small way, of course—even as it was; he was probably the youngest in all the army of metropolitan *littérateurs*—but promotion does not go in that service by seniority, and only very seldom by purchase. He had brought out his first book, and it had been received as few productions of authors in their minority have been welcomed. I will not say how far his connexion with the *Porcupine* had assisted him in this. There are jealousies and enmities enough among the gentlemen of the press, but they all pull together in a most laudable manner upon

two occasions: first, in depreciating any "outsider;" secondly, in belauding one another to the public.

Of course, Frederick's book was a volume of poetry. Almost all authors, whether they subsequently make any mark in the world as prose-writers or poets, make their first venture in rhyme. It is said that for a young driver a pair of even-stepping horses are really easier to manage than one, and perhaps this holds good in literature; but, at all events, the fact is as I have said. Were it not ungenerous, and almost a breach of confidence, to let the general public into such secrets, I could mention half-a-dozen prosperous prose writers who have started with steeds in double harness-rhyme, upset the (borrowed) chariot of Apollo, and then wisely given the thing up, and taken to a gig. The majority of popular novelists have in early life written plays which have been damned; but a still greater portion have made their literary *début* with a volume of verses. After the age of four-and-twenty, they never breathe a syllable about this creation of their genius, of which, six years before, they were so extravagantly

proud; and after thirty, they resolutely deny even that they ever committed such an imprudence. Lucky for them if some kind friend has not preserved a copy out of which to read high-flown sentiments at inopportune occasions to the confusion of their author.

So Mr. Frederick Galton published his verse-book, bound in appropriate green, but containing neither the morbid poem (for he had advisers about him) nor the Lines to M. P., which Mr. Jonathan Johnson had erroneously supposed to be of a political character. It was really a very creditable little book indeed, although it did not take the town by storm at once—or even afterwards. Most of the reviews spoke highly of it, and every word of praise they said was believed by this (in general) very sagacious young gentleman; some of them, indeed, treated it with contempt, but there was a good and sufficient reason for that too (he was well convinced) in private malevolence. Yet the callow poet writhed under every adverse criticisms, and again and again lost his appetite for the day after perusing them. His friends, even his real ones, took care that not a single

one should escape his notice; and more than once they themselves gave him their candid opinion upon the performance, which he would gladly have dispensed with. "What did he want of their confounded opinion?" (This was the way he expressed it to himself). "If they liked the thing, well and good, and it was pleasant to hear them say so. But who had asked them to find fault, he would like to know? Did they suppose he was not at least as alive to his own shortcomings as they could possibly be? Had he, or they, given the more attentive consideration to the subject? Finally, did they really intend to do him good by such detraction, or merely to make themselves unpleasant? Ah!"

The state of self delusion which held that gentleman, who, having obtained the senior wranglership at Cambridge, decided not to come up to London until the excitement consequent upon his success had subsided in the public mind, is unassuming modesty compared with the feelings of a youth who has just published his first book of poems.

Mr. Frederick Galton did not forget his personal friends in the distribution of his lyrics. Old Mrs. Perling, down at Oldborough, got a copy, which her daughter Jane read out to her aloud, and many delightful little evening naps were thereby afforded her. Mrs. Hartopp also received the precious volume, and after one very praiseworthy attempt to understand it, placed it reverently upon her little bookcase between the "Whole Duty of Man" and Mrs. Glass's receipt-book. Everybody who had ever interested themselves in the young author, in fact, received this little acknowledgment at his hands, so that the public were not in reality so much to be commended, as it seemed, for calling for a second edition. Still, they did call for it. This widened the gulf between the undergraduate of Minim Hall and Frederick's present self beyond all bridging. It was impossible, he had written to his father, that he could now return to the university to pursue studies that were uncongenial, and to submit to regulations that were irksome. He announced this determination with such gentleness and dutiful affection

as had moved the good doctor greatly. Absence from his boy had only made the father's heart grow fonder; and when, in the first page of his son's first book, he perceived that it was dedicated to himself, he could hardly read the graceful and affectionate words for tears. He scarcely made any opposition to the young man's taking his own way in life now, since he found it so much to his mind; for, indeed, this period of Frederick's career was no less happy than promising. He was a great favourite with nineteen-twentieths of his associates, and he rather enjoyed the hatred of the remainder than otherwise. Percival Potts and his following were, of course, among his enemies, and the war waged between him and them was unceasing; but he was not afraid of the great *littérateur* in the least, and his satellites he thoroughly despised. Just at present, however, they had him at a disadvantage, on account of his lyrics, which they misquoted unmercifully.

There was a certain literary club, whereof most of the contributors to the *Porcupine* were members, and which Frederick had joined upon his first arrival in

town. It met at a tavern, where matters were conducted in a very unpretending way; but it would have been an agreeable society enough had it not been for Potts. By him, the place was turned into a sort of lecture-room, for the piecemeal delivery of his autobiography. Mr. Jonathan Johnson, indeed, now and then rebelled against the oppression exercised by this egotistic creature, but only too often let him rant and rave as he would. When he spoke—and he was always speaking — no other dog dared bark, or even utter a whine of remonstrance. Many suffered in silence, drawing what philosophy they could through their pipe-tubes, for the despotism under which they groaned was mitigated by tobacco; others were mere hangers-on of Potts, and liked, or pretended to like to hear him. The former class welcomed Mr. Frederick Galton with secret joy; they shared his aspirations for freedom; and connived at his revolutionary designs, although they lacked the courage to give him any open support. He had gone to this would-be convivial society late one winter evening, after some dinner-party; his father's friends

were numerous, and hospitable to him, and he was welcome at the family tables of many of his college acquaintances; at all events he had been somewhere where evening costume was *de rigueur*. Now, the Bohemians, the Free Lances of literature, of whom the admirers of Mr. Percival Potts chiefly consisted, despise above all things a dress-coat, as being the very badge and uniform of the slaves of Convention and Respectability.

"We cannot," cried one—"we really can *not* permit a man with a white tie and garnet buttons to his waistcoat"—

"And shirt-studs of brilliants," added a second.

"And sleeve-buttons of gold," continued a third.

"How they appraise me!" cried Frederick—"how they gloat with their hungry eyes! they are thinking to themselves how they would be off at once to the pawnbroker's, if they possessed but a tenth of these valuables."

"Leave the young gentleman alone!" cried Potts with a sneer; he moves in very high society, *Juvenum*

nobilium clicns; he is the constant companion of young swells. Let us be thankful that he comes among us humble folk at all."

"My good Potts," returned Frederick, "you are very kind to say so; I trust that I have been always affable to my inferiors.—Waiter, fetch me some gin that has been in your master's cellar since the consulship of Manlius, or that remembers the Marsian war."

"Yes, sir—certainly, sir," answered that functionary, and a roar of laughter followed his mechanical reply.

But Mr. Percival Potts was not one of the laughers; he knew, as everybody else did, save the waiter, at whom these classical allusions were aimed.

Mr. Jonathan Johnson, foreseeing horrid war, endeavoured to monopolise the attention of the younger combatant. "My young friend," said he, "come and sit by me. I have a very serious matter to talk to you about," whispered he in a lower tone. "I heard to-day, for the first time, from the good lady in Bolton Row, that you had left her lodgings, without rhyme or reason, these three months, and departed she knows not

whither. Now, I have nothing to do with your manner of life myself, but I candidly tell you that I must communicate this fact to your uncle."

"He is quite aware of my present address," observed Mr. Galton innocently. "I'll tell you all about it some day. At present, let us drink. *Cætera mitte loqui*, if I am not trespassing upon the private preserves of our learned friend yonder."

"A more inane production, even for a boy, I never set eyes on," remarked Percival Potts, addressing himself to a neighbour, but in tones that were quite audible through the room.

There was some murmured reply.

"Praised!" continued the sub-editor, disdainfully, "you should rather say puffed! There are some critics who will write anything for a good dinner, and the young man is very open-handed."

Here occurred an outbreak of that description of mirth which is called "a sniggle."

"Queen Stratonica, wife of Seleucus, had not one hair upon her head; yet she gave six hundred crowns

to a poet who praised her tresses, which he sang had the genuine hue of the marygold."

"Good, good!" "Hear, hear!" ejaculated the Satellites.

"What a damned trick of it—tit—tit—tit—iteration the fellow has," observed Jonathan Johnson.

"Nothing is easier than to apply stale quotations, if you only carry about with you a sufficient quantity of that sort of rubbish," remarked Frederick contemptuously; "keep a thing long enough, and a use for it is sure to arise."

"I am afraid, sir," remarked a Pottsite, "that it would be a long time before either you or I attained such aptitude"—

"Speak for yourself, my friend," interrupted Frederick rudely, for Potts could be borne, but not his parasites. "I will tell you a classical story that exactly fits the present case."

Here the waiter entered the room, and whispered: "Mr. Galton, you are wanted; there is somebody below that wishes to speak with you."

"Beg him to wait a moment, if you please," returned Frederick, civilly (for he never in his life omitted to be courteous to an inferior); then, looking straight towards the head of the table, where sat the great Potts enthroned among his admiring friends, he delivered himself as follows: "There was a man in Libya, called Psaphon, to whom nature had been sufficiently indulgent, but who yet imagined himself to be a much more wonderful person than he really was. In order to get others to agree with him, he captured as many birds as he could, as were *just capable of imitating human speech*, and taught them to pronounce these words distinctly: 'Psaphon is a great god.' This done, he set them all at liberty, who filled the woods and fields with this ludicrously mendacious statement; so that many foolish persons hearing that cuckoo-note, began to think that there was something in it. Now I need not say"—

Almost every man rose to his feet, for, although etiquette did not much trammel the proceedings of that society, an attack at once so bitter, so personal and so well deserved, had rarely been made; the voice

of Potts broke forth in wrath, that of Mr. Jonathan Johnson in mitigation, and a score of faces turned towards Frederick Galton in indignation or approval; but the young man saw only one face, that of Jacob Lunes, the Casterton carrier, and he heard but one voice, speaking in the dialect of Downshire, but with a pathos that is common to every human tongue, when it tells of death and love together: "Coom home, Mayster Frederick; I have come up hot-foot to fetch yer. Coom home, for God's sake, and if thou wouldst see thy fayther once again before he dies."

CHAPTER XIV.

EVIL TIDINGS.

THE few words spoken by the simple carrier into Frederick Galton's ear transformed him as completely into another being as magic wand was ever fabled to do. His outward form, indeed, remained unchanged, save that his cheek, flushed with wine and quarrel, turned to a deadly paleness, but his heart seemed to collapse within him, leaving an aching void, and a flood of vague, remorseful memories rushed to his brain, and drowned all present thought. He found himself in the street, and in a cab with the messenger, with the horse going as fast as it could lay legs to ground, before he was well aware that he had left the club-room, with its excited faces and eager tones. Then he cried: "Stop! I must call somewhere: I cannot leave town without"—

"Nay, Master Frederick, but we shall miss the mail," interrupted the carrier appealingly. "Your father is *very* ill."

"I know that, man," returned the other fiercely. "He is dying—I read that in your eyes; but for one instant—for one single instant"— He put his head out of the window hastily, so that his spring-hat fell out, and was crushed under the wheels, and cried out to the driver: "Lower Seymour Street. It is on your way—quick, quick!" Then he drew in his pale face speckled with dirty snow—for there had been a heavy fall for days, and it was now thawing fast—and sat with his fingers upon the outside handle of the door, ready to leap forth without delay. As the cab slackened pace before the house he did so, and opened the front door, and was in the passage in a moment, yet not so soon but that a flood of light poured into it from the ground-floor sitting-room, and a female form came out to meet him, and cast her arms about his neck. He was back again in the cab, after one hurried sentence, and the wheels were in motion, in less time

than it takes to write it; while the woman was standing in the doorway, her look of welcome changed to one of wondering sorrow, as she gazed after the retreating vehicle.

The face of Jacob Lunes, too, was altered for the worse. "I am sorry you stopped, Master Frederick," said he, gravely, "since—you must forgive me for saying so—it"— The bluff carrier was about to say something severe upon the conduct of the lad, whom he had known from the cradle, and seen, and probably spoken with, every other day of his life; but the anguish depicted in the young man's features stayed his speech. "The Lord have mercy upon us all, Master Frederick, young and old!" said he instead; "though there are some as seem to be as good as angels already. I am sure your father is as sweet-souled as any fellow-creature breathing; if good wishes can carry a man up to heaven, the prayers of all poor folks nigh Casterton, sir— Pray, pray, don't take on so, Master Frederick; while there's life there's hope, you know."

"Go on, Jacob, go on," sobbed the young man; "it

does one good to hear you. I can listen to you now, as I could not do a while ago. Here is the station, and we are in time, thank Heaven! When we get in the train, tell me all that has happened, and do not mind if I don't speak, Jacob—I shall hear."

So Frederick Galton sat in one corner of the railway carriage, where the light from the pale, oil-lamp scarcely fell on him at all, and listened in silence.

"It was the night afore last, Master Frederick, and snowing hard, as it had been doin' for a week before, when the doctor was sent for to Nancy Reeves, a labourer's wife, away beyond Bilbury Clumps; I should say five miles or more. It ought to have been a parish case, but your father was allus for sparing that young Union Sawbones. 'And, besides,' says he: 'I can get there in my gig in half the time, and it's ten to one he loses himself in the snow, being strange to the Downs.' Then the poor woman, too—her husband was away, you see, and this her eleventh child—was in that sort of condition towards which I think your good father was more particularly tender. You see, he lost

your mother, Master Frederick, in childbirth; and all husbands—this is what my old woman says, at least, and she knows a vast—has a sort of claim upon him, as he thinks, so as they should not be left, if *he* can help it any way, all desolate-like, and forsaken, as he himself was, until, leastways, *you* growed up—"

"And afterwards," groaned Frederick bitterly. "I forsook him, Jacob, *I*—"

"Nay, nay; don't take on so, sir; young men will be young men. You couldn't be expected to be mewed up—he said so himself, he did indeed—in a little country village, being such a clever young gentleman; and he tried to reconcile himself all he could when he was left lonesome like, and worked—the good gentleman did, even harder than ever. God knows, it was not to get gain neither; *his* visits cost him something, instead of winning him reward, they did, for his hand was open to the poor. You are all that, that I will say; you and your uncle, and your father—none of you knows how to say "No" when another says "Give." Lord! how he have got took in, again and again; but then it ain't lost—

that's what my old woman says—it's all kep an account of; and I wish such a ledger, or anything like it, was awaiting me, as the angel book-keepers have got to show in favour of your father. God bless him! God bless him!" The good carrier broke down for a little while, for he could stand wind and weather better than the telling of bad news. "I ax your pardon, Master Frederick; but he was a good friend to me and mine, was your father, years before you was borned into this world; and at my time of life, why, we don't make new friends."

"No, nor forget old ones, Jacob. Go on; I deserve anything."

"Why, Master Frederick, I meant nothing against you! don't think it for a moment. Of course, a young gentleman like you must make new friends, both men and women; though, as to women, I honestly tell you it give me a turn just now to see the face I did at the door we stopped at. Nothing comes of that sort of thing in the end but sorrow, if not worse: 'in the hour of death, and in the Day of Judgment'—then it's a sad

business. I ain't given to cantin' in a general way; but coming, as it might be, from your poor father's deathbed, why, it makes one serious-minded. And I am sorry—though it were no fault o' mine—that it was my cart as she first came in to Casterton."

"Jacob Lunes," returned the young man quietly, "I know all you would say about that matter, and I am not angry. I have justly earned your ill opinion. But please to tell me now about my father."

"Well, sir, he called up John, and bid him put the young mare in the buggy, although she was rather skittish for night-work, but they had all been out that day save her, and the doctor was always mindful of dumb beasts, and would never use a tired horse if he could help it. He would not let Joe drive the buggy either, but started with the little boy who had come with the message. What a blessed thing, Master Frederick must it be to lose one's life in thinking for others!"

"I shall never die that way, Jacob," murmured the young man, sorrowfully. "Go on, go on."

"Well, sir, he did not come back that night, nor

yet in the morning. At first, we thought it was only that Nancy was not getting over her trouble so easily as usual, and that your father had stayed at the cottage all night. But when in the afternoon the same messenger arrived at Casterton for some medicine the doctor had ordered, "when he left before daybreak," we knew that something dreadful must have happened to him. Then you might have seen how dearly we all loved your poor father, Master Frederick. Your uncle, and the Squire, and Farmer Groves, and all as had horses, started off in a great company over the Downs towards Bilbury; for it was plain that he had tried to come back that way, since, if he had kept the main road, the lad must have seen him. After them came well nigh all in Casterton. The blacksmith left his anvil, and the cobbler his stall, for work was not to be thought of while the doctor was missing; nay, even the postman, after his weary day's walk, started off that afternoon across the snowy hills, as though he had never set foot to ground. It was necessary to go over the whole track before darkness set in a second time

and fell upon him somewhere, lost upon the desolate white Downs—for that he had come to any harm from the hand of man was out of the question; not a rogue in the county was so great a rascal as to have done the doctor a bad turn; and as for enemies, he had none but Disease and Dirt, as ever I heard him speak of. He was always for whitewashing and window-opening, and such like, to an uncommon degree surely, which only shows that even the best of us has his weaknesses.

"Well, when we had got about three miles out, I was riding my old Dobbin, next man to the parson, but not very close, for we was a-spreading out pretty wide, near a quarter of a mile, as I should say, I see a dark speck on the snow, and it were moving slowly. This was the poor doctor's bay mare, a'most dead beat, hobbling along through the deep snow with two broken traces and a bit of the gig-shaft dragging at her heels. Then we knew that what we was in search of was not far off. It was easy enough to track the wanderings of the poor creature; and presently, all of a sudden—for

he was hidden by a great bank of snow—we come, Master Frederick, upon your poor father. He was alying on his back, with the gig turned over beside him, and there he had lain for hours and hours, for he couldn't move—no, not so much as turn his head. His poor back were broke, as I believe; and he must have suffered terrible. God only knows why. Why should I, a drunkard, sir, occasionally, and who minds my own concerns, and don't trouble about the misfortunes of others, have been sleeping in my bed, sound and hearty, all that night, and that good man have lain on the snow-covered ridgeway, with his face to the cold sky? Yet, if you'll believe it, he gave a smile as we came up, and murmured something about how good it were of us to come to seek him; yet how that he had expected nothing less from us. Squire Meyrick was kneeling over him, and weeping like a child; and Mr. Morrit, I never see a man so moved in all my life—and yet such a head left to him. "We have not brought a doctor with us, William," said he, "although Watchem has been sent for; but we have an easy litter and

bearers; only you must tell us how we can lift you, so as to cause you the least pain."

"Then a shudder seemed to fall upon your poor father's face, for he well knew what agony was awaiting him; the pain he was then suffering was dulled and blunted, I suppose, to what it was when he came to be moved, for he fainted right away, before the men got him upon their shoulders. And so we brought him home insensible, thank Heaven! and he was lying in his own bed when he came to again. Then the very first word as ever he spoke was, "Frederick! where's my Frederick?" and Mr. Morrit bid me put-to Dobbin, and take the train to London, and bring you back home at once, wherever I could find you. I was to go to Mr. Johnson's first, as you had changed your lodgings so often lately, and he would be likeliest to know where you were."

At the station, there was a carriage and pair in waiting for Frederick. "He is yet alive," answered the driver to Jacob Lunes—and they wound their way up from the white-sheeted valley to the Downland as fast

as the snow would permit. The moonlight shed a ghastly paleness for a little upon all that the snow had spared, and then the treeless tract showed even more unspeakably desolate in the gray and tardy dawn. It was scarcely daylight when they came in sight of the shining Round. How many a morning had smitten that lonely earthen citadel, bringing with it joy and sorrow, life and death, to succeeding generations! From henceforth, neither the romance of History nor the dawn of Love was to be associated with that monument of the past in Frederick's mind, but only the sense of Loss.

It had not fallen upon him as yet, however, for though the blinds were down, and the shutters closed in all other apartments of the cottage, his father's room, up to the window of which he looked with anxious fear, was not so darkened, and the face of his uncle was at the pane, impatient for his coming.

It was Mr. Morrit who opened the door before the carriage stopped, and took the lad's cold hand within his own, and led him into the house of mourn-

ing. Frederick understood the friendly firmness of his uncle's grasp, and returned it willingly. It was no time for quarrel now. They stood at the doorway of his father's room; he had but rarely entered it, and every time he had done so seemed to recur to him during the instant that he paused upon the threshold. He had learned his prayers there. He remembered kneeling down between his father's knees, with his childish hands folded within the doctor's palms, and repeating the simple words which he used even now morning and evening. He remembered with what delight he used to watch him shaving, an operation at once inexplicable and entrancing; and with what less agreeable feelings he was wont to repeat the multiplication and pence tables during other portions of the doctor's toilet. The good man had had such very little leisure, that he had made the most of every opportunity of getting the society of his boy. It was an apartment which he had regarded in childhood with mystic reverence, for his mother had died there. It had seemed so strange that people should die at all, and

especially young people; and her picture told him how very young she was.

That portrait, which the doctor had caused to be taken to his son's room, either because he could not trust himself to look upon it, or to show his love by lending him the most precious thing he had, had now been re-transferred to his own chamber. It hung immediately opposite to the sick man's pillow, so that it was always before his eyes. When Frederick entered, the motionless form upon the bed struck him with horror. The doctor was wont to have a brisk and cheery way of looking up at any arrival, even though he knew it was the messenger of tidings which would carry him upon a profitless journey over many miles; but now not a muscle moved. A sort of mellow sadness stole over the gray grave face; his eyes filled slowly with tears, and his lips gave audible thanks to Heaven for that he had been permitted to see his son before he died. It is a solemn reflection how often we are made the subject of prayer, the topic of spiritual intercourse between our Creator and those who love

us; but when he who prays is within a very few hours, perhaps even minutes, of a personal communion with God, how awful is the mention of our name! If the pure in heart shall see Him, Dr. Galton was hastening of a surety into his august Presence. Everybody in the room felt that. Mrs. Hartopp stood by the bedside weeping, but not sobbing, for she knew her duty as a sick-nurse too well for the indulgence of such weakness; whenever she had to pass within the range of her dear master's vision, she took care that not a tear should be visible. Mr. Morrit, except that his face was white, remained outwardly unmoved; but when he spoke, his voice was hoarse and broken. The parish doctor, a very young man, and not much used to such sad scenes, was perhaps the most overcome. Dr. Galton had been very kind to him; it was actually in doing him a gratuitous service that he had met with his fatal misfortune. For the present time, at all events, gratitude and pity swallowed up all thoughts of extension of country practice, and promotion by decease.

It was a necessary attribute of Frederick Galton's mind that it should receive these impressions, just as the retina of his eye took in the material accessories of the scene without his volition; but all his thoughts, as all his gaze, were concentrated upon his dying father. He stooped down and kissed his forehead, and then kneeling by the bedside, hid his face in the coverlet, and sobbed as though his heart would break.

"Robert," said the sick man plaintively—as though he would have added: "See what a sensitive nature, and how unfitted to battle with the world alone is here!"—"be a father to my boy."

"I will, if he will let me, William," returned the curate solemnly, but not without a jar in the words. "He knows what you would wish—he knows"—— The sentence was never finished. A sharp pain flitted across Dr. Galton's face—Frederick thought it was an expression of distress at his uncle's tone—and was instantly replaced by a look of measureless content and calm. It was the welcome of the peace of God, which passeth all understanding.

Frederick fainted away. When he came to himself, he was on the sofa in the little dining-room, with his uncle sitting by his head, and touching his temples with eau-de-Cologne. "You and I, dear boy, are now left alone in the world; your dear father has appointed me to be your guardian; but that is nothing compared to the importance of our being friends. Forgive me for speaking of anything save him at such a time as this; but I know how soon the heart of man grows callous, and forgets such scenes as that we have just witnessed. Frederick, he is gone from earth, but you owe him reverence still. His last thoughts, his last words were for your happiness: if he had had the power, he would have besought you to be guided by me in the one great act, which once committed is irrevocable. I charge you, by the remembrance of his love, now quick and warm within you, to promise me that you will never make an infamous marriage."

Jacob Lunes, then, had told his uncle of the face that had looked after them piteously, as they left it in its solitude in London.

"Sir," answered Frederick coldly, "I have never contemplated incurring any such disgrace."

"I do not wish to argue, nephew; this is no time for that. Promise me that you will never marry Mary Perling."

"I cannot well do that, uncle."

"Why not, boy, why not?"

Mr. Morrit spoke with impatience, but not with vexation; like one who perceives an obstacle indeed, but also the means of surmounting it."

"Because," continued Frederick Galton, with quiet distinctness, "Mary Perling and I have been married these five months."

CHAPTER XV.

CUTTING THE PAINTER.

THERE are many persons, neither unintelligent nor imprudent, who do not possess the faculty of making the best of a bad job. This would seem, at first sight, to be the most ordinary exercise of common sense; yet people who especially pride themselves upon that very quality, are often the least capable of saying: "Let bygones be bygones," and "Better luck next time." They are so indignant that matters have turned out contrary to their sage expectations, and especially with those who have acted counter to their advice, that they proceed to behave with far greater folly than that which has aroused their wrath. The simple truth that What is done cannot be undone, fails to strike them with the proper force. Prevent, while it is yet prevent-

able, by every possible means, your ward's running away with your footman. Drag the menial by his swallow-tails from the very altar of Hymen, and place his powdered head under the pump. Immure the would-be bride in the second-pair back, with nothing but works upon etiquette for her mental pabulum. Stick at nothing in the way of asseveration of how you will never advance her a shilling until you are obliged, nor give her intended husband a character for another place as long as he lives. Entreat, protest, denounce; you can scarcely go too far in the way of menace. But if the mischief is actually *done;* if John Thomas *has* married the heiress, she by no means unwilling, how foolish is it to put any of those prohibitory threats in action. It will only make matters worse to keep the young couple in penury; to oblige the bridegroom still to practise his profession in velvet smalls and silk stockings—to carry the poodle of his mistress, when he ought to be walking arm-in-arm with his lawful wife. The better plan would obviously be to settle the ill-assorted pair in some obscure locality, where the man

might get accustomed to trousers, to wearing a hat without a gold band, and be broken as far as possible of his systematic abuse of the aspirate.

But nine guardians out of ten never behave half so sensibly as this. They pretend that they have a duty to perform towards Society, and that an example must be made of Miss Laura Matilda, in order that others may be deterred from doing likewise. Under this transparent falsehood, they work their own private revenge. Society is in reality delighted with the *mésalliance,* which affords it an exciting topic of talk for days; while nothing could afford so much comfort to the injured guardian of social morality as the news that somebody else's ward had done the same or worse. Ordinary folks do not act upon public grounds, while there are any private ones to go upon. When some striking event is suddenly dropped into the quiet backwater of our lives, it makes many circles, but the most clearly marked and sensible are those which are close at hand; it concerns ourselves, our families, our friends, our acquaintances, always with lessening force,

until it scarcely concerns Society at all, but only titillates it. Under these circumstances, the Devotees who boast of sacrificing to so indifferent a divinity, must be looked upon with some suspicion.

When the Rev. Robert Morrit heard from his nephew's own lips that he had married his late father's household servant, he was honestly outraged and indignant. His language, considering the circumstances—the dead body of him they both loved best in the world being separated from them but by a board or two and the ceiling—was violent, and certainly what the lawyers call "injurious." He accused the young man of systematic hypocrisy and selfish passion. He even went so far as to say that his poor father had met with a kind friend in that Death which had spared him the knowledge of his son's unworthiness. But when the first burst of wrath was spent, and he took to talking of the sense of duty that would compel him to visit such unfilial conduct with marked severity, Frederick grew angry in his turn. He had expected an outbreak of resentment, and had made as much

allowance for it as could be expected in one of his temperament, but he was not going to be made a public example for his uncle to preach against. In his contemptuous scorn at the exhibition of such vulgar malice, he permitted himself to utter certain home-truths concerning the curate.

"Look you, Mr. Morrit," said he, "I am not a child any longer, so you may spare these remarks for your next sermon. You are speaking out of the bitterness of your own heart, under pretence of inculcating high-flown moral precepts. When all things go just as you would order them, there is not a more smooth-spoken, agreeable gentleman alive. You play the patron very graciously; but let the client presume to think for himself, and you become his tyrant. You, who are all for frankness, can be false, too, when you think falseness will serve your turn. You are not difficult to read, reverend sir, at all."

"Frederick!—nephew! For God's sake do not speak so loud. Remember where you are, and what has happened. Are you mad?"

"Not speak so loud!" continued the young man mockingly. "Ay, that is the parsons' creed all over. Let us be quiet, and shave smoothly. The strength of sin is in being found out. Yes, I do remember what has happened, sir, and I have to thank you for it. But for you and your family pride—which was not so stiff but that it stooped to lies—I should have been in my own home here, along with my dear father, and perhaps he would not have been"——

Mr. Morrit rose, and held up his hand with quiet dignity.

"I say, sir," continued Frederick, but less impetuously, "that had he been left to himself without those worldly counsels, which become the mouth of a clergyman so ill, he would have consented long ago to my marriage. Who are you, that have dared to come with your shallow talk between a father and his only son?"

"I am your mother's brother, Frederick Galton, and, I regret to say, of the same blood, therefore, with yourself. I had every right to do all I could to save you—and myself, too, if you will have it so—from what I

considered, and do consider still, a lifelong disgrace. You have forced this discussion upon me in this time and place"——

"What! *I?*" ejaculated the young man. "I who woke from what I took to be a ghastly dream of my father's death, to hear my wife reviled by your sharp tongue. Indeed, Mr. Morrit, both opportunity and theme were of your own gracious choice."

"Then, in so far as they were so, I am sorry, Mr. Frederick Galton," returned the curate haughtily. "In the name of common decency, let this matter rest for the present."

"No, no, sir," answered the young man hotly; "since you have begun, pray finish. There is something behind which you have yet to favour me with. You wear a concealed weapon; come, what is it? You strove to rob me of my father's love; perhaps you have succeeded in persuading him"——

Here the young man paused, ashamed. He was not so blinded by passion but that a remembrance of early days stole in upon his soul, and quenched his speech

ere it had reached its bitter end. But a little more than twelve months back, this man, to whom he was attributing such baseness, had been his adviser, teacher, friend, his *beau-idéal* of a Christian gentleman. If any one, a year ago, had told him that he would one day seriously quarrel with his uncle Robert Morrit, he would have laughed at the absurdity of such a notion; yet now he was upon the point of accusing him, whom he knew to be one of the most generous of men, of covetous greed; nay, worse, of having endeavoured to enrich himself in a manner worse than fraudulent at his nephew's expense.

The supposition was hateful, and more like one of those monsters of the imagination that are said to intrude themselves at times into the thoughts of the purest, than any reasonable idea. Yet, strange to say, the curate's countenance did not express either contempt or indignation. It was hard, and even resentful, but there was a shamefacedness about it altogether inexplicable to the young man; and when the answer came, although determined and deliberate enough, it was couched in somewhat of an apologetic tone.

"It is perfectly true, Frederick Galton, that I have succeeded in persuading your father to leave his property in such a manner that I can exercise control over it for the next six years—until, that is, you are of the age of twenty-five; while, if you die in the meantime, I should become the inheritor of all you possess."

Frederick started up with an oath upon his lips, the first the curate had ever heard him speak, the first, perhaps, he had ever uttered beneath that roof.

"Forgive me if I shock you, reverend sir," pursued the young man bitterly; "I forgot for the moment your peculiar moral organization. You shudder at bad words; the appearance of evil is by all means to be avoided; although hypocrisy, and deceit, and fraud should all shake hands together within us, as they have in you, you sanctimonious slave!"

"Take you care, Frederick Galton; take you care," rejoined Mr. Morrit, his voice trembling with passion. "There are some things which, once said, we cannot forgive. I wish to act fairly and justly in the matter."

Frederick laughed aloud. Mrs. Hartopp heard him

in that awful chamber overhead, and shuddered. Had her poor young master gone mad with grief? Should she venture down into the parlour? No; his good, kind uncle was with him, who would know how to manage him far better than she.

"I repeat," continued the curate, "I do not mean to be cruel—to act otherwise than with the firmness I had always intended; only do not rouse that devil within me, which is in every man."

"What! even in clergymen!" returned Frederick mockingly. "You astonish me!"

"I will allow you two hundred and fifty pounds a year, which would have been ample for you as a single man; but I will take no notice of such an alliance as you have chosen to form. I ignore it altogether—I will never acknowledge it."

"That will be terrible, indeed, sir," observed the young man derisively, "your patronage being so indispensable; but, just at present, I am most interested in the pecuniary question. Am I to understand, once for all, that I am entirely dependent upon your will

and pleasure for my income; and that I shall be, until the age of twenty-five, a beggar, indebted to you for such alms as you consider sufficient?"

"Such, sir, are your actual circumstances," returned the curate coldly, "although you need not have expressed them in such offensive terms."

"And if you manage to get me poisoned in the meantime, you will be my sole heir, notwithstanding I may leave wife and children destitute behind me."

"If you die within the period you mention," answered Mr. Morrit, "I shall be your sole heir."

"The very house, then, in which I now stand, is yours for the present, and may be yours altogether; the roof under which I was born may no longer shelter me, unless by your good leave!"

"There is no need to talk of such things as these Frederick Galton," groaned the curate; "you have said enough already to supply bitter thoughts for my whole lifetime. How did this dreadful talk begin? This last hour, God knows, has been far, far, more terrible than any in my life."

"I am truly sorry, sir, to have thus inconvenienced you," pursued the young man with a savage sneer; "but I wish clearly to understand our relative position. I would not trespass upon your generous forbearance upon any account. I particularly desire to know whether I am your guest, here in my father's house—whether, in a word, it is yours or mine."

"It is yours, Frederick. Your poor father made an especial exception of this cottage when disposing provisionally of the rest of his property, and because there were associations about it doubtless dear to you"—

"Let us waive all that, Mr. Morrit, if you please. The time has long gone by for the introduction of sentiment in any discussion between you and me. Am I the master of this house or not?"

"You are; as, of course you would be," added the curate hurriedly, "whether it was left to you or to me."

"Perhaps," returned Frederick cynically; "but, at all events, the house *is* mine. Good. Then, the first use I make of my proprietorship is to request you to

rid me of your presence, which is distasteful to me in the highest degree."

"What! Frederick Galton, would you turn me out of doors?" pleaded the curate, with a glance at the little carriage-sweep outside, where a knot of downcast faces were collected, talking together in hushed tones.

"Ay," replied the young man, "that I will; I wish there were more to see you. That is where the sting lies, is it not? But cheer up, sir; you may take your revenge afterward fifty-fold. *Hodie mihi, cras tibi,* as our old friends, the classics used to say."

Yes, Frederick could even refer to those happy days of teacher and pupil, and the thought of them actually strengthened his vindictive purpose. He saw before him, as he imagined, a hypocrite so adroit and smooth, that he had never been so much as suspected of a baseness—one who had obtained, under false pretences, his own respect and love, and who had gained such influence over his father as to persuade him to wrong his only and beloved son. He could not, or would not perceive the

well-meant though most mistaken motive which had prompted his uncle to advise such a disposition of the good doctor's very considerable property. He was ignorant that a clause making the curate heir in case of his own demise before a certain age, was necessary to the carrying out of the intention of the testator. He really believed that Mr. Morrit had robbed him, and, what was worse, was in a position to rob the wife of his bosom, and the children which she might bear to him, in the event of his own death before he reached five-and-twenty. He knew that his uncle regarded his marriage as a family humiliation and disgrace; that he would probably manifest his disapprobation by every means in his power. It galled him beyond measure to be dependent upon him under such circumstances as these, and he cared for nothing, for the present, save to show his contempt and wrath.

Mr. Morrit, on the other hand, was far from satisfied with respect to the advice which he had offered to his late brother-in-law, and, indeed, had importuned him to act upon. The will had been drawn up and signed

only a few months before, at a date actually subsequent to that on which Frederick had taken the imprudent step against which it was mainly directed. If his marriage had been known, matters would doubtless have been arranged far otherwise.

Mr. Morrit had intended to use his powers solely for the purpose for which they had been delegated to him, namely to prevent that social catastrophe which had already occurred. They were never intended as an instrument of punishment after the offence had been committed, but so enraged had the curate been on the sudden disclosure of the *mésalliance*, that he behaved and spoke of them as if they were. He knew that he was treating the young Benedict somewhat unfairly, but he had no idea of the proportions his error had assumed in his nephew's eyes. He could not believe, no matter in how ill a light his conduct might appear, that Frederick Galton would seriously insist upon his leaving the cottage. Yet the young man's eyes looked very hard and stern as he stood with his fingers on the handle of the open parlour-door, and motioned with his

other hand that his uncle should pass through into the little hall. There is no determination (while it lasts) so immutable as that of passionate, wounded pride. Frederick Galton would have said, "Go!" though all the earthly prospects of him and his depended—as indeed, it seemed they did—upon his saying the contrary. "You cannot bid me leave this house," appealed his uncle, with a look quite scared at the dreadful pass to which matters had somehow arrived—"with my best friend lying dead in it—my sister's husband—the father of the lad that was once"—

"We have had enough of that, Mr. Morrit, and more than enough," interrupted the young man grimly. "Permit me to undo the latch. You have forgotten your hat, sir. Here it is. I beg you will not trouble yourself to cross this threshold again."

CHAPTER XVI.

AN UNWELCOME PATRON.

MONEY, let us concede, is not everything, but it is a very great deal. The young philosopher may smile at the solemn manner in which it is referred to by those who show reverence for little else; he may make merry with the serious change that comes over the cheery and good-tempered business-man while he is worshipping at Mammon's shrine; but there is really something wondrous and almost terrible in the power of money, and such as belongs to few other things. To have too much of it, is agreed upon all hands to be a very dangerous matter, likely to lead its possessor to his eternal ruin. When Garrick showed to Johnson his villa and his gardens, expecting to hear them admired, the lexicographer greatly disappointed him by replying:

"Ah, David, David, these are the things which make a death-bed terrible!" On the other hand, an empty purse is said on good authority to be an equally perilous possession, and indeed has been entitled by a divine of the English church "the very devil." Finally, even moderate wealth has been inveighed against; that fatal gift, a little competence, which prevents a man from exerting his energies, and makes him useless all the days of his life.

But where Mammon shows himself most hateful and most strong, is when he is set in opposition to human love; when he stands frowning between two fond hearts that would fain be one; or sits upon the tomb of the dead, and unlinks the loving hands of the survivors, who, now that they have lost their common friend, should surely have journeyed on more closely knit together than ever. What a legacy of disappointment, and jealousy, and hate, do men often leave behind them among those, too, against whom they have had no ill-will! How often has the grave of a parent been the gulf which has sundered brother from brother for ever in

this world! How often have Tenderness, and fostering Care, and the Self-sacrifice of a whole life, been erased from the conscious heart by a single pen-stroke in a dead man's will! The deepest affection is dried up, the keenest gratitude is blunted; and Confidence and filial Love—the very elements which have most hallowed the Past—are plucked up in a moment by the roots, and cast aside for ever. The evil that we do lives after us; and the last deed we do—the making of our will—may sow more ill than all that we have planted in that teeming soil, the human heart, throughout our lives.

When Frederick Galton, having turned his only relative out of doors, shut himself up in his own bedroom, next to that in which lay his father's corpse, it was not only to grieve. His grief was great and genuine, but it was mingled with—I had almost written mitigated by—a bitter sense of wrong. He thought, with tears, of the thousand ways and words wherein the good doctor had shown his love for his son. The driving-gloves that were lying on the hall-table as he came upstairs; the watch that some one had transferred

to his chamber from the pillow of him who had now done with time for ever; the Bible which that nerveless hand had given him years and years ago—the sight of these things stabbed him like a sword. But the thought of a beautiful and loving face watching for him with patient sadness, also occurred to him, and stayed his tears for him that had done her wrong, and set his teeth in hate against the officious fool that had advised the doing of it.

Alone, then, in that desolate home, Frederick passed the weary days that elapsed between the death and burial of his father—such days as are like no others in the experience of our lives; when the awful stillness of the house is broken by yet more awful sounds, and strangers come and go at will in the chambers that were once so sacred, and minister to him who cares not now for loving service. The young man need not have been without company, had he been disposed for it Squire Meyrick (whose son was not at home, it being term-time at Camford) came in person to invite him to the Grange. Mr. Tregarthen called, and was very

pressing in his desire to see him. But the orphaned lad would see nobody. He well knew that the chief object of both these gentlemen's visits was to induce him to be reconciled to his uncle, the news of their quarrel having spread far and wide. Wherever the good doctor's death was talked of, the marriage of Frederick was discussed also, and the estrangement that had already grown out of that ill-judged union. Even on the day of the funeral, when half the gentry of the county, who had come over the snowy wastes for miles to do honour to their old friend's memory, were assembled in that low-roofed breakfast-room at Casterton, the conversation turned at least as much upon the son as on the father. How strange and indecent it seemed that Mr. Morrit should not be there among them on such an occasion as that! How resentful must the young man have been of a few words of censure; how impatient of wholesome control! Such conduct towards his natural guardian was not the way to conciliate the public opinion, already outraged by his choice of a serving-maid for his partner for life.

And with respect to that matter, what was to be done in future, in case he should choose to live at Casterton? It was quite impossible that their wives and daughters could call upon Mrs. Galton. That would have been an encouragement to every dairymaid in the country to entrap the affections of her master's son—a positive premium upon that vice which is erroneously called *Pamela, or Virtue Rewarded.* And was she really a respectable girl, by-the-bye, eh, was she? Then the old gentlemen's heads wagged knowingly, and they whispered to one another in unctuous tones; so that when the poor young man appeared in his sombre garments, pale and haggard, and looking as unlike a gay Lothario as could be, they set him down as a sort of Joseph Surface.

If the gentry of Downshire expected homage from Frederick Galton, or the slightest trace of apology for his late offence against Society, in look, or air, or tone, they must assuredly have been disappointed. His manner to Mr. Tregarthen of Tregarthen, the first commoner in the county, and who had married, it was

understood, a lineal descendant of William the Conqueror, was at least that of equal with equal. He was courteous as Sir Charles Grandison to all, and acknowledged with feeling their expressions of sympathy; but he understood what was passing through their minds concerning him and his as clearly as though he had overheard their recent talk; there was antagonism between them and him; and in his heart he cursed the social usage which brings together a herd of mere acquaintances to divide the last duties to the dead with his nearest and dearest. Mere Respect, however deep and genuine, should not be permitted to walk side by side with Love to the foot of the grave, and the sacred tears of grief should be suffered to flow unrestrained and out of sight of curious eyes.* Yet

* The Irish funeral-processions which emerge from Whitechapel have been the subject of censure; the first two coaches contain the weeping relatives; then half-a-dozen cabs convey those mourners of both sexes whose distress is alleviated by courtships; and the procession is wound up by casual acquaintances of the deceased person, sitting upon the roof of the vehicles as well as within them, and drinking to his immortal health in whisky. Yet the elements of the most fashionable funeral are equally incongruous.

rarely, perhaps, had the obsequies of any man been attended by more genuine mourners than followed Dr. Galton to the grave. Almost every man and woman in Casterton, however poor, had put on a piece of crape or ribbon in token of that friend whom all had lost, and were waiting hushed and solemn in the church or in the God's-acre. They, too, had heard, and greedily discussed, the breach between uncle and nephew; but they were more immediately and materially concerned in the good doctor's loss than their betters, and it was that which mainly filled their minds. Many a horny hand was raised by that grave-side to wipe away tears from unaccustomed eyes; many a mother held up her child as the dark coffin was lowered into its bed, and bade it look its last upon the best friend that mother had ever had in sickness and in sorrow. Mr. Morrit read the beautiful service for the dead with his usual distinctness of utterance, but every now and then he paused, for there was something in his throat that went nigh to choke him. When all was over, the crowd still stood around the sacred place, as though expecting

Frederick and the curate would reach out a hand to one another. Mr. Tregarthen leaned over towards the latter, and whispered something into his ear, but the moment had gone by for the reconciliation, even if he suggested it; the young man had already turned, and was walking homeward with hasty strides.

At the churchyard gate, however, some one hailed him by name, and there stood Mr. Thomas Morrit, holding out five very shaky fingers.

"This is a very bad business, Master Frederick," hiccuped he; "I don't mean my poor friend, your father's death, because death happens to all; but this other affair—your marriage."

Frederick stopped and stared at the audacious speaker with a look of dumb surprise; then he strove to pass on, but the other seized his hand, and shook it in his giant grasp with maudlin vehemence.

"Now look you, Fred, my boy; I'll stand your friend. I've an eye for a pretty girl myself, and can pardon these little peccadillos. You're right enough to have made an honest woman of her—that's what I've

said to everybody; and I'll act up to it. Now the day after you bring her to Casterton, my wife shall come over and call upon her—there—that's a bargain."

"You are most kind," answered Frederick; "most kind, I am sure."

He spoke with frightful bitterness, but Mr. Thomas Morrit perceived nothing of that; for not being able to resist the strong liquors, and especially the port, provided at the house of mourning, he had been passing the last hour and a half in rendering himself intoxicated.

Mr. Thomas Morrit seemed to be the only individual in Downshire prepared to forgive the young man the grievous wrong he had committed against Society in marrying Mary Perling; he might evidently have done far worse without half the blame, for vice is common enough, it is said, among youth of the first quality; but the folly of a legal union with an ineligible young woman, is almost as rare as it is irreparable. Even Mrs. Hartopp, the housekeeper, had regarded her young master, ever since she knew that he was her nephew

by marriage, with at least as much pity as admiration. She acknowledged to herself that he had behaved "very honourable;" but she would rather, upon the whole, that the young couple had never set eyes upon one another. She never opened her lips upon the subject, until he was about to enter the carriage which took him to the railway station, on the very evening of the funeral, and then she only observed: "Well, I *do* hope, Master Frederick, after all this sad, sad work," and the old lady shook her head, as though it was not for her to gainsay the opinion of the county, "that Mary will make you a good wife."

"If she does not do so," replied the young man earnestly, and they were the first healthy, hopeful words which he had spoken for some days—"if she does not make me a good wife, Nanny, it will be my own fault, God bless her! and not hers."

CHAPTER XVII.

LIFE WITHOUT BUTCHER'S BILLS.

THE marriage of Frederick Galton, bachelor, with Mary Perling, spinster (for so far Society and the most respectable Church Establishment in Europe had nothing to object to the contract), had been solemnized in a very quiet and unostentatious manner. It had been a fashionable wedding in this respect, that "no cards" had been issued to the friends of either bride or bridegroom—but in no other. Mary had provided herself, in a marvellous short time, with a very inconsiderable *trousseau*, by the aid of which, however, she somehow contrived to look as ladylike and beautiful as any woman in Belgravia. She was really, to all appearance, a born-lady, as her poor father used to say

of her, with pardonable pride; but for my part, so far as looks go, I cannot see the difference between persons of her sex who are born-ladies and those who are artificial imitations. To know a gentleman from a snob, is easy enough; but to discriminate between two lovely females—unless one of them carries a cotton umbrella, a prayer-book folded up in a pocket-handkerchief, or some other decided badge of social position—is altogether beyond this present writer. I have seen such elegantly dressed and graceful creatures flirting in Kensington Gardens, upon a Sunday, with her Majesty's Foot-guards, as have excited the liveliest apprehensions in my breast with respect to the morals of our female aristocracy. They were doubtless only ladies'-maids, at highest, but who was to tell them from ladies? Females—and especially lovely females—have such a natural aptitude of making the best of themselves; they are so ingenious in the provision of ornament; and beauty itself, although so common, is so dainty and glorious a possession, that I conclude the whole sex to be ladies, as Sir Philip Sidney (or some

such military enthusiast) is said to have set down all soldiers as gentlemen.

Even women themselves are liable to be deceived in this matter, as you may tell from the sharp suspicious way in which they scan one another in public, and make their rapid valuations respecting apparel, and the like, as their sisters, who are also unfortunately their rivals, pass by. "Ah, gown *turned;* gloves *cleaned;* parasol only newly *covered,* unless my eyes deceive me," &c. I dare say Mrs. Frederick Galton's toilet was not thought very much of by other newly-married young ladies; although, if valued according to the labour of love bestowed upon it, it would have excelled the attire of a duchess. It had caused sleep to desert dear Widow Perling's eyes for nights; not that she sat up like a poor milliner, "stitch, stitch, stitch," at the garments in question, but that she lay awake, hour after hour, thinking of them, and how lovely her dear Mary would look in them. Heaven bless such vanity, say I, and make our nightly thoughts as innocent! She did work at them, a little; she did all that she

could trust herself to do. But the more important articles (let me tell you) were town-made; Oldborough never turned out the wedding-gown, nor yet the bonnet. It was not an occasion for sparing money, as the dear, good, sensible, economical old soul could clearly perceive. Nobody should be able to put a slight upon her married daughter, with respect to her apparel at least; and it was with a feeling of honest pride, preferable to the humility of most folks, that the old dame refused certain pecuniary help, which Frederick delicately tendered, at this period of necessary extravagance. "My daughter has no dower, it is true," thought the stout old dame, "but it behoves me all the more to see that she has a becoming wardrobe." It was charming to see how perfectly her new son-in-law appreciated her in all that she said or did with respect to Mary. The very subject upon which most men split with their mothers-in-law—namely, their own wife—was the bond of union between himself and the Widow Perling.

When that *éclaircissement,* which we foresaw was an

inevitable consequence upon Mr. Frederick's deceptive conduct in Grosvenor Square, took place, Mary's mother had sought him out in person, as she had done at Camford. A more vulgar nature would probably have resented this second visitation, but Frederick bore her deserved reproaches as from one who had a right to give them, and did loyal homage to her in his heart at the same time. He had placed her daughter and his intended wife in a very false position at Lady Ackers's. Mrs. Mettal, the housekeeper, had had a bad quarter of an hour with her ladyship, who was of the old school, and a great stickler for the proprieties; and she herself was deeply incensed that a young girl lodging under her particular protection should have been so used. Sir Geoffrey Ackers cut Mr. Frederick Galton dead, as they met face to face in that little passage which leads from Bolton Row to Berkeley Street, and where recognition may be said to be a necessity. "The idea of a man having the bad taste to come to one's mother's house to court a maid-servant, and, upon being found out, to pretend to be making a morning

call!" He treated the notion of intended marriage as a chimera of Mrs. Mettal's brain, or as an impudent invention of the offender, extemporized to mitigate his crime. It is terrible to think what Mary herself endured among society in that sunk floor of Grosvenor Square during the forty-eight hours which followed her lover's visit. At the expiration of that period, Mrs. Perling (summoned in haste, but not needing to be urged) arrived in town, and took her into lodgings; and then went off to present a piece of her mind to Mr. Frederick, who, as I have said, was pleased to receive it very graciously.

"I have behaved," confessed he frankly, "like a snob and a fool in one. Nothing you can say, madam, can make me experience a keener sense of shame and degradation than that which I already feel. I have no excuse whatever to offer for my baseness; but I will make what reparation I can. I will marry dear Mary immediately—that is, if she will have me."

And dear Mary was much more forgiving than he deserved, and consented so to do. Mr. Frederick

Galton therefore procured a licence, after that very moderate delay which the law interposes between two devoted souls who have contrived hitherto to exist in separate parishes, and took unto him Mary Perling to wife. The widow was present at the wedding, but not Jane; a convenient indisposition prevented her coming up from Oldborough. It is better, thought she to herself, that one like me, a poor cripple in a cotton gown, should be absent on such an occasion. It was bliss enough for her to work at the *trousseau*, and to select the flowers for her sister's bouquet, and for the adornment of her new London home. The marriage was to be kept a secret for the present, until some opportunity should arise—which we know, alas! it never did—for breaking the news to Dr. Galton. In the meantime, Mr. Frederick worked very hard at his profession, in hopes to be able to give a good account of his prospects, whenever the necessity for disclosure should come, as well as to provide for present needs.

This latter task, even at the very starting-point of his

matrimonial career, was not an easy one. His allowance from his father, although amply sufficient for himself, was not enough for two. Had Mary been as good a manager as her sister, he would probably have lived as cheaply as a bachelor; for a wife who knows her domestic duties is an absolute saving to a man, all the nonsense that has been talked concerning the three-hundred-pound-a-year marriage question notwithstanding; but Mrs. Galton had very imperfect notions about domestic economy, and those only adapted to a country life. Frederick himself, although not extravagant after the manner of many young gentlemen of the town, who cannot pass a haberdasher's window without coveting some scarf, at once beautiful and chaste, or a jeweller's without hankering after some pin to stick into it, was, to say the least, of expensive habits. He had never been under the necessity of denying himself an ice, if he was hot, or a cigar, if he was cold, or a cab, if he felt weary; and these little luxuries, to which there can surely be no objection to any man's indulging in upon any one day, cost *annually* (for he

had once the fancy to keep an account of them for a whole year) exactly 115*l.* 14*s.* 1*d.**

It will perhaps be remarked that this must have made a large hole in the young man's allowance, and have reduced the rest of his income to within very narrow bounds; and so it did: yet what remained was quite sufficient for him, since he did not fritter any of it away in paying the bills of tailors, shoemakers, and the like, which were permitted to "run on," in accordance with their respective wishes. Human life has never, that I am aware of, been apportioned into such epochs, but it might very well be divided into, first, the period at which everything is paid for one; secondly, the season when some things are paid for one, and not others; thirdly, that evil stage of life when we have to pay for everything ourselves; and, finally, that terrible era when we begin to defray the charges of other people. Frederick had, of course, reached the third of these landings on the mortal stairs, but it was pleasant to

* This last curiously diminutive item belonged to £1 4*s.* 1*d.* incurred upon the aggregate for cigar-lights alone.

imagine that he was yet upon the flight below. The poetry of life had received a shock or two—he had defrayed his own washing-bills for months—but it was still fresh and vigorous. The vulgar realities of existence had not yet presented themselves—for the paying of one's dinner at a club or at an hotel is not like discharging a butcher's bill or a fishmonger's—but he had had an indistinct idea that they were gathering about him. Still, when they did come, was there not always a powerful Prospero in his father to still the tumult of such a sea of troubles with one motion of his friendly wand?

When to the summer haze of literature and social enjoyment which surrounded him, was added the dreamy love-light of the honeymoon, things did not wear a much more practical shape. The young fellow was too thoroughly enchanted with his domestic fairy, to suffer her to play the housewife, although she would very willingly have done so. He put off all her questions as to expenditure with jesting answers; and then protesting (falsely) that she pouted and was very

cross, he gave her to pay the bills with—twenty kisses. She began to think that it was, perhaps, only her inferior breeding that led her to be solicitous about pecuniary cares; and being, above all things, desirous to make him forget *that*, she ceased to trouble him with such vulgar inquiries as "Can we afford it?" or such uninteresting scraps of information as that the grocer's young man had "called again." After all, there was not much harm done, if events had taken the course that was most probable; filial confession, tender reconciliation, payment in full by cheque, was the comfortable programme that Frederick had sketched out for themselves in his own mind; and now, alas! all upon a sudden, Prospero lies dead, and his wand has been taken fraudulent possession of by cruel Uncle Caliban.

Doubtless, the remembrance of many an unpaid bill —the existence of which had never hitherto troubled him—had risen up before poor Frederick's vision in that hour of quarrel with the curate, and stung him into bitterness and insult, when patience and gentle words might have healed all.

CHAPTER XVIII.

SOMEBODY COMING.

MARY, of course, had heard by letter from her husband concerning the death of Dr. Galton, and it had distressed her very much. She had never received anything but kindness at the hands of that worthy and gentle man. It was doubtless a relief to her that that disclosure concerning the marriage, which had hung over her in a more menacing shape than it had appeared to Frederick, who was assured beforehand of the paternal forgiveness, would now be no longer necessary. People might henceforth know of it at Casterton and Oldborough, as some already knew in London. Still her loving heart was grieved, and she reproached herself with having had a share, however innocent, in

keeping the old man asunder from his son in his last days.

Frederick had arrived by an earlier train than he had calculated upon, and letting himself in by a latch-key, had come upon her unawares at home. She was in deep mourning, which admirably set off her delicate beauty, and her face was pale and sad as a drooping lily. She was plying her needle busily by lamplight, but every now and then she looked up from her work to a little portrait of her husband which she had set upright on the table before her. Its original stood behind her before she had time to put it aside, which was, perhaps, why she blushed so as she gave that little cry of loving welcome. Her simple joy at seeing him gladdened Frederick to the core; the possession of the devoted love of this beautiful and tender-hearted girl might surely console him for the loss of many things. Wiser men than he had not only risked but incurred certain ruin for a less priceless pearl of woman-kind; and was he to repine because this had cost him a few hundreds a year?

"My darling, darling wife, you are now all in all to me," cried he in a rapture.

"All in all to him," murmured she, like the cooing of a dove, as he clasped her in his arms. Such are golden words, stereotyped instantly upon the tablet of a woman's heart; and not to be erased by any wrong that the speaker may subsequently do unto her, nay, nor even by the long corrosion of neglect.

"Yes, Mary, we two are alone in the world now—quite alone."

"I know, I know, love," answered she plaintively. "How I wish, ah, how I wish we had told him"—— Here she stopped, for it was Frederick himself who had been always for procrastination with respect to acknowledging his marriage.

He answered a little drily. "That cannot be helped now, Mary, though it was unfortunate—I cannot say how unfortunate. It was not of my father's death that I spoke when I said we two were alone in the world. I might have almost said we were alone *against* the world."

"Oh, Frederick, what *do* you mean? Are they all so angry, then—so very, very much ashamed of me?"

Ashamed of her! If any man could have looked unmoved upon that face, turned passionately upwards towards his own, and pleading with all the eloquence of youth and loveliness against the stern decrees of etiquette, it was certainly not Frederick Galton. Ashamed of her! No, let the painted old hag Society shake her palsied head at him till the feathers came out of her wig! Ashamed of her! no, he was proud to call her Wife.

"The opinion of the Downshire folks, my darling, concerning our marriage has not been officially conveyed to me; and, to tell you the truth, I don't care three farthings about it: but my uncle Morrit is very wroth."

"I am afraid he does not like me at all," said Mary, dropping a tear or two. "He was very hard to us at Oldborough. But surely your poor father's death has softened him. Dear, dear me, and a minister too!"

"Yes, Mary, he has always had the will to do us

mischief, and now he has the power. My father has most unfortunately left me dependent upon him until I am twenty-five. He refuses to allow me a shilling more than I have already. He will not pay one of our debts."

Mary Galton sank into a chair, and covered her face with her hands.

"Come, darling, don't give way like that. We are not so poor that we shall starve. You will have to put into practice all those little economies which you used to be so inclined for; that is all. Why, I thought you had a brave heart."

And Mary Galton *had* a brave heart; never beat a braver one beneath woman's breast—and women in cases of this sort are braver than men. She was not afraid for herself. She would rather, as far as she was concerned, that they were both poorer folks than they were even now like to be; that they lived together in some humble cottage like the Limes, where she might earn something towards the common maintenance. But Frederick, being of the male sex, imagined she was weeping upon her own account.

"Come, cheer up, my pet; things may not turn out so bad as they look at present," said he. "I flatter myself that a day will come when my pen will win for my wife all that is necessary for her, without the aid of any man."

"Oh, Frederick, I was not thinking of that," cried she passionately. "What does it matter though I were poor, and badly lodged, and coarsely fed, and clothed quite otherwise than in things like these. I am used to poverty; it is my natural condition; and I ought to have remained in that state of life to which God called me. I have dragged you down to my own level."

She rocked herself pitifully to and fro; and when her terrified husband laid his hand upon her soothingly, she shrunk from his touch.

"I deserve no love," moaned she; "a good girl would not have acted as I have done. Jane thought so, and so did mother too, I know."

"Mary, darling—my own dear wife, pray, pray be calm. There is nothing done that I would wish undone —nothing."

"Yes, yes," rejoined the young girl, shaking her head so vehemently that her hair broke from its silken bonds, and decked her shoulders and neck and bosom with a thousand golden links—"there is much done, and grievous harm. I have come between you and those who love you. I have separated you from your equals and your friends. Oh, why was I ever born to work such woe!"

"Then do you regret that you have married me, Mary? Do you wish to leave me?"

"I wish to die!" interrupted she, with a passionate cry, "but not to leave you. If I could not do that months and months ago, having only seen you, and heard you speak, how can I do so now?" She raised her tearful face, and looked up into his, as though to seek excuse or mitigation, and her lips moved in devotion, like those of some innocent penitent, who, at the shrine of her patron saint, accuses herself of some peccadillo which she calls crime.

"But, my own darling," reasoned Frederick, interrupting with a kiss a large round tear which was about

to flood a dimple, "since you can't make up your mind to leave me, and since I would not exchange you for a cargo of princesses, if you could, why should we make our lovely cheeks into watercourses all about nothing? Upon my word, it is not complimentary to my talents to conclude that they will not save us from ruin, far less be a sufficient support for you and me.'

"For me, Frederick, yes, or even for you *alone.* But for me, you would have gained fortune, fame, position, and a wife in every way more worthy of you—except that she could not love you more than I do. I feel, ah me! like some selfish wretch who, drowning in the river of life, have cast my arms round your neck only that we may drown together."

"And a very pleasant way of getting out of the world, too," replied Frederick gaily. "Too much Malmsey was nothing to it. Put your arms round it now, my pretty one. No, Mary, you are no millstone; you will sustain me rather in the troubled waters of life. It is good for a man to have some one to live for,

some one to work for, some one to love, besides himself. If he can keep himself, he can keep a wife; what is enough for one, is enough for two.

> "Look through mine eyes with thine. True wife,
> Round my true heart thine arms entwine;
> My other dearer life in life,
> Look through my very soul with thine!"

But Mary's eyes were downcast, and their gaze was fixed upon the work she had hastily thrown aside when her husband came in. "What! you like hemming and sewing better than me, you puss, do you?" continued he lovingly; "or are you thinking of helping to support the establishment by taking in needlework? What is all this bordering and lace-work? What queer little garments? Is it dolls' clothing for a charitable fancy fair, you benevolent fairy?"

"No, Frederick, dear, dear husband, it is not dolls clothing; it is—— What is enough for one, is enough for two; but will it be enough for *three?*"

"Oh, there's Somebody coming, is there?" returned Frederick ruefully.

"I think—I am afraid there is," murmured the young wife. "How happy and thankful I was about it an hour ago! but now—— O husband, husband dear, what *shall* we do?"

"Christen it, I suppose, when the time comes, my dear, as likewise get it vaccinated," observed Frederick comically. "In the mean time, it is no use anticipating the washerwoman by crying over its things." He stooped and touched her forehead with his lips, and spoke as gaily as he could, for he knew that she needed comfort; but he was very far from gratified by the news. "Somebody coming is there?" repeated he thoughtfully. "Well, well, so be it. But don't 'take on so,' Mary, darling, as Mrs. Hartopp used to say, just because I can't say: 'Welcome, little stranger'—like a lace pincushion."

END OF VOL. II.

R. CLAY, SON, AND TAYLOR, PRINTERS, BREAD STREET HILL.